The leader in physical activity for young children!

Playground Planner
Create an Outdoor Playground!

Complete, cross-curricular playgrounds promote whole-child development!

Ground-level and freestanding activities promote fine- and gross-motor skill development and encourage higher levels of physical activity.

Play activities that provide auditory, visual, or tactile feedback reinforce and develop understanding of cause-and-effect.

Talk tubes, interactive games, and music activities provide children a way to contribute to the sounds of the play environment, and encourage them to communicate, cooperate, and vocalize.

Under-deck activities and seating areas offer a place to socialize, rest, or observe until emotionally ready to engage, while dramatic play elements encourage children to think creatively and use their imaginations.

Crawl tubes and under-deck activities provide sensory stimuli; natural materials like sand and water provide elements that stimulate the senses.

Get started today! 1-888-330-1826
Proper planning is key to your playground's success. Here are some factors you need to consider:

- What is your budget?
- How large of a space do you need?
- What kind of surfacing should be installed?
- How much shade should be provided?
- What kind of equipment do you want?
- What natural elements (gardens, plants, play events) would you like to keep or add to your playground?
- Are there trees or other obstructions that may interfere with the play area or equipment use zones?
- Is there currently a drainage system in place to limit standing/excess water?
- How accessible is the site? Can large equipment/machinery get into the area if necessary? (Typically a 10’-14’ wide access point is needed during installation.)

Getting Started...
Review and complete the Playground Planning Questions in this kit. Be sure to reference the "Essential Play Elements" page for ideas on incorporating different types of play.

Then, check out our Playground Planner tool located at PWAP.com/planner

What exactly is a use zone?
It’s defined by the CPSC as the surface under and around a piece of equipment which a child falling or exiting from the equipment would be expected to land. Plan for this much space for your equipment, and cover the ground with appropriate safety surfacing, keeping in mind that the surfacing should always be clear of trikes and other toys that may injure a falling child. For easy planning, Play with a Purpose® lists the use zone dimensions on applicable products.
Determine Your Budget

You know you need new playground equipment, but where is the money going to come from?

There are a number of funding sources you can consider, including:

- Fundraising
- Grants (see pwap.com for grant opportunities)
- Financing (application enclosed)
- General or Capital Funds

BUDGET

Choosing the Right Equipment

- What age(s) of children will use your equipment? This will help determine the size of the structure(s) you choose, as well as the variety of events to accommodate those ages. You may opt for a single structure with a range of activities for different ages, or a variety of structures tailored to different ages.
- What type of construction will you choose? Structures made of steel, vs. aluminum or plastic, all offer different benefits and price points.
- Does your location offer natural shade, or will you need to create shaded areas with structure roofs and/or canopies? Play with a Purpose® offers a full range of shade options.
  
  *According to most local and/or state guidelines, a portion of your playground is required to have shaded areas.*

Choosing Your Surfacing

- To ensure compliance, your playground must be surrounded by a durable and protective surfacing material. Play with a Purpose® offers wood mulch, rubber mulch, rubber tile, grass, and pour-in-place surfacing, all with specific benefits and pricing.
- Learn more about the various types of playground surfacing in the "Choose Your Surfacing" sheet included in this kit.

Installation & Site Preparation

- The type of playground equipment you choose and your overall budget may help determine installation method and costs.

Playground Freight

- Keep in mind that playground equipment is heavy, and freight charges will apply to your purchase.
Playground Planning Questions

Let's start thinking about your playground needs and requirements! The first step is to consider the following Project Requirement as you begin your research. Be sure to have your Play with a Purpose® catalog handy, along with the "Essential Play Elements" sheet you'll find included in this kit.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

A. How many children will use the playground at any one time? __________________________________________
   State and local regulations may stipulate the maximum-use number.

B. What are the children's age ranges? (check all that apply) ☐ 0-2 years ☐ 2-5 years ☐ 5-12 years
   The Consumer Product Safety Commission and the American Society for Testing Materials (CPSC/ASTM) recommend separate play areas for each age group, with age-appropriate equipment.

C. Will special-needs or physically challenged students use the playground equipment? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates handicapped access to public playgrounds. We can help you meet this standard.

D. Looking at the area's current shade, is additional shading needed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

E. What local codes or requirements must be considered? ____________________________________________

F. Will existing equipment remain on the site? ☐ Yes ☐ No ____________________________________________

G. What are the dimensions and configuration of the play area? ________________________________________
   Diagram the play area on the "Sketch Your Play Area" document. Also, you can visit PWAP.com/planner to plan your playground online.

H. What, if any, construction hazards are near the proposed play area (e.g., underground utilities, granite hard rock, pipelines, etc.)?

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Make sure your equipment meets your county and state guidelines.

If you plan to leave existing equipment on-site, check to ensure that it meets current safety standards or guidelines. Contact your county or city building inspection office or talk with your licensing representative for information on equipment inspection and remediation. To learn more about national standards, check out the Public Playground Safety Handbook: www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/325.pdf

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Select equipment designed to offer age-appropriate challenges and skill development, such as gross- and fine-motor skills, socialization skills, and imaginative play skills.

- **Modular Play Structures** consist of linked posts and decks at various heights with a variety of play events attached.
  - [ ] ADA-Accessible Activities
  - [ ] Balance Activities
  - [ ] Themed Play
  - [ ] Climbers
  - [ ] Slides
  - [ ] Auditory Activities
  - [ ] Activity Panels
  - [ ] Overhead Events (for children over 5 years)

- **Independent Play Activities** are stand-alone items that can be used to complement a modular play structure, singularly or in groups.
  - [ ] Sand & Water Tables
  - [ ] Ball Games/Hoops
  - [ ] Climbing Walls
  - [ ] Spring Riders
  - [ ] Swings
  - [ ] Slides
  - [ ] Art Centers
  - [ ] Gardening
  - [ ] Balance Activities
  - [ ] Sandboxes
  - [ ] Crawl Tubes
  - [ ] Music Centers
  - [ ] Climbers
  - [ ] Special Seating
  - [ ] Vehicles

- **Free Play Elements** are an important part of the playground, offering children an opportunity to make their own choices while taking a break from the scheduled portions of the day.
  - [ ] Ball Games
  - [ ] Hoops
  - [ ] Parachutes
  - [ ] Jump Ropes
  - [ ] Ride-Ons
  - [ ] Natural Play Area (Trees, Hills, Grass, etc.)

- **Site Amenities** provide your play area with long-lasting, user-friendly furnishings.
  - [ ] Picnic Tables
  - [ ] Benches
  - [ ] Signs
  - [ ] Shade
  - [ ] Trash Receptacles
  - [ ] Trike Track

- **Safety Surfacing** is required.
  - [ ] Engineered Wood Fiber
  - [ ] Rubber Mulch
  - [ ] Rubber Tile
  - [ ] Pour-in-Place Surfacing
  - [ ] Synthetic Grass
  - [ ] Keep Current Surfacing

- **Color Combinations** are available on some items to suit various tastes and applications. Please list your post, component, and plastic color choices.
  - [ ] Primary
  - [ ] Natural
  - [ ] Contemporary
  - [ ] Second primary
  - [ ] Second natural
  - [ ] Second contemporary

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Essential Play Elements

Playground Components:
1. Climbing (Including metal, plastic, net, ground-to-deck, and deck-to-deck climbers)
2. Sliding
3. Swings
4. Brachiating (Overhead climbing)
5. Balance
6. Bouncing/Jumping
7. Spinning
8. Running
9. Dramatic Play
10. Gardening
11. Art
12. Music
13. Sand and/or Water
14. Open Active Play Areas (Balls—all sizes and types, trikes, Hop-Along™ Bouncers, flying discs, parachutes, jump ropes; Accessories:— basketball hoops, soccer goals, t-ball sets, bowling)

Types of Play
1. Motor/Physical Play: Develops gross- and fine-motor skills with overall muscle integration
2. Social Play: Promotes social roles—give/take, sharing, and cooperation
3. Constructive Play: Teaches kids how to manipulate their environment to create things
4. Fantasy Play: Helps kids learn how to think abstractly and develop imagination
5. Rule-Based Games: Promotes listening and cooperation with games such as Follow the Leader, Tag, Simon Says

Forms of Play
1. Solitary Play: Babies explore their environment on their own; older kids may build, paint, read, draw, enjoy “down time”
2. Parallel Play: Children play side-by-side with little or no interaction; very different from Solitary Play
3. Group Play: Children socializing with others, developing social skills; themed play begins to emerge

Important Playground Considerations
• Plan for Large Scale: Having ample room to move is essential to developing gross-motor skills.
• Include Free Play Elements: Self-directed, free play is one of the most important parts of the playground, allowing children a reprieve from the scheduled day. Ensure free access to play items.
• Encourage Exploration: Playground time allows exploring, imaging, and idea expression in a “risk free” environment.
• Don’t Stress About Mess! When kids play outside, it’s ok to get a little messy.
• Create an Outdoor Classroom: Lessons can be moved, created, and altered to fit the outdoor environment and your playground (however, it is important that these “lessons” not be done during recess or other designated free-play time).
• Incorporate Natural Features: What natural features does your playground area currently have that you can incorporate? What can be added?

To learn more about national playground standards, check out the Public Playground Safety Handbook: www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/325.pdf

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Choosing Your Surfacing

Inappropriate surfacing can cause playground injuries.

Surfacing must meet strict safety standards to properly protect children from life-threatening injuries.

Playground surfaces fall into two main categories:
- **Loose-fill materials** – wood fiber, rubber mulch, wood mulch, sand, and pea gravel
- **Unitary synthetic materials** – pour-in-place, tile, and synthetic grass turf

No single playground surface is the right choice in every case. When choosing playground surfacing, consider:
- Material type and site preparation
- Proper drainage and maintenance
- Local regulations, CPSC, ASTM, and ADA compliance

The chart below is a brief summary of common types of playground surfacing materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surface</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Maintenance</th>
<th>Initial Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF)</td>
<td>Economical, ADA compliant</td>
<td>Slowly breaks down; may be burned; may be thrown, scattered, or displaced; may grow germs when wet; may hide garbage; may cause splinters</td>
<td>Regular inspection, periodic raking, removal of foreign matter, periodic addition and replacement of bark/chips, higher ongoing maintenance costs</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Mulch</td>
<td>Cost effective, ADA compliant, durable, no dust or decomposition, will not rot, choice of colors</td>
<td>May be thrown, scattered, or displaced; may hide garbage</td>
<td>Regular inspection, low maintenance costs</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Tile*</td>
<td>Drains well, ADA compliant, stays in place, durable, easy to clean, choice of colors, no curing time</td>
<td>Initial expense, seams, professional installation recommended</td>
<td>Low maintenance costs, requires regular grooming to remove debris such as leaves</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthetic Grass*</td>
<td>Drains well, ADA compliant, stays in place, easy to clean, nonflammable, durable, aesthetically pleasing (looks like real grass)</td>
<td>Initial expense, professional installation required</td>
<td>Low maintenance costs, requires regular grooming to remove debris such as leaves</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pour-in-Place*</td>
<td>Drains well, ADA compliant, stays in place, durable, easy to clean, seamless, choice of patterns, graphics, and colors</td>
<td>Initial expense, professional installation required</td>
<td>Low maintenance costs, requires regular grooming to remove debris such as leaves</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Requires a permanent sub-base.
You can use this space to start thinking about what your playground might look like: locations and types of play events, natural features such as trees, etc. Or, better yet, let our helpful playground planner tool do the work for you at PWAP.com/planner.
Using the Online Playground Planner

Simple, Step-by-Step Design!
Our interactive online playground planner has all the tools you need to plan and execute the perfect playground! Create a custom design that matches your area’s dimensions and layout... add and move playground equipment, select surfacing, and more!

You can save, retrieve, and modify your design at any time.

Start planning your playground today! PWAP.com/planner