

PLAYSPACE REPORT CARD

Questions for keeping children safe, protecting children from the sun, and preventing play area injuries for all seasons of play.

Does Your Play Area Make the Grade? Answer 'Yes' or 'No' for each statement below.

	YES	NO
SITE LOCATION		
Location of the playspace is protected from motorized hazards		
Children can be easily viewed on equipment and throughout the play area		
The site location is designed to encourage active supervision.		
Shade (natural, structure, building) is available at least 70% of time during play experiences.		
Warning signs are posted to check surfacing and equipment temperatures		
APPROPRIATE DESIGN		
The play area is designed for airflow for increased thermal comfort.		
Trees, plants, or other appropriate landscaping elements are present.		
The area has a variety of play experiences for different ages of children.		
Placement of equipment does not interfere with other play activities.		
Equipment discourages children from climbing outside the structure.		
Platforms allow children to change directions for getting off of the structure.		
Accessible routes are present allowing children to access the play area and equipment.		
FALL AREA PROTECTION		
Suitable surfacing materials are present		
Appropriate depth of loose fill material is provided		
6-foot protective surfacing use zone is present		
Concrete footings are covered		
Shade protects unitary play surfaces during prolonged sun exposure		
ENVIRONMENT & EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE		
Environment is inviting to users		
Environment is well-maintained		
Surface is free of foreign objects		
Environment is free from strangulation hazards		
Equipment is free of head entrapments		
Equipment is free of noticeable gaps		
Equipment is free of broken or missing parts		
TOTAL POINTS		

SCORING SYSTEM

Total the number of "Yes" answers in the "Total Points" box in the table.

24 – 19 = A

Well done! The playspace is well maintained and thermally comfortable.

18 – 16 = B

The playspace is headed in the right direction. Work on the areas checked 'No'.

15 – 12 = C


The playspace is potentially not comfortable or has unsafe conditions. Take corrective measures.

11 – 7 = D

Children are at risk. Make plans for improvements.

6 & below = F

Make changes immediately.

**If any of the boxes highlighted in this color  are marked 'NO', the potential of a life-threatening injury is significantly increased. Contact the owner/operator.

EXPLANATION OF RISK FACTOR CRITERIA

SITE LOCATION

1. The location of the playspace is critical. Eliminate life threatening hazards.
2. Children need to be seen and heard. This question is asking if there are any blind spots where children can hide out of the sight of the supervisor.
3. Since equipment can't supervise children, the layout and site location are designed to allow for supervision.
4. During summer months, exposure to sun can heat surfaces such as slides, platforms, and steps creating hazards for burns. Shade is available to cool the playspace area and to protect users from dangerous heat.
5. Signs posted can be used to give some guidance and to inform user to check the temperature of surface materials prior to play.

APPROPRIATE DESIGN

1. Air movement affects thermal comfort by increasing evaporative loss through the skin and heat transfer between the body and the surrounding environment. During cold seasons, it best to protect cold wind to control the thermal environment. In contrast, in warm and hot conditions, elevated air speeds can improve thermal comfort.
2. Trees and landscaping can improve thermal comfort by reducing solar radiation and lowering air and surface temperature.
3. It is recommended for play areas to have a variety of age appropriate play experiences. Equipment directs children under the age 23 months, 2-5 years old, and/or 5-12 year olds.
4. The layout of pathways are accessible. Placement of equipment and play elements do not interrupt other play experiences.
5. Either guardrails or protective barriers may be used to prevent inadvertent or unintentional falls off elevated platforms. To provide greater protection, protective barriers are designed to prevent intentional attempts by children.
6. Platforms over six feet in height are provide an intermediate standing surface where a decision can be made to halt the ascent or to pursue an alternative means of descent.
7. An accessible route is a continuous, unobstructed path that connects all accessible spaces and elements.

FALL AREA PROTECTION

1. Appropriate surfaces are either loose fill (engineered wood fiber, sand, pea gravel, or shredded tires) or unitary surfaces (rubber tiles, rubber mats, and poured in place rubber). Inappropriate surface materials are asphalt, concrete, dirt, and grass. It should be noted that falls from one foot onto concrete could cause a concussion. Falls from a height of eight feet onto dirt is the same as a child hitting a brick wall traveling 30 mph. Research has shown that equipment height can double the probability of a child getting injured.
2. Proper depth of playground surfacing must be at the appropriate depth to cushion falls. An inch of sand upon hard packed dirt will not provide any protection. 12 inches of loose fill material under and around playground equipment is a good idea for initial installment.
3. Appropriate surfacing should be located directly underneath equipment and extend six feet in all directions with the exception of slides and swings, which have a longer use zone.
4. Concrete footings around any of the equipment should not be exposed. Deaths or permanent disabilities have occurred from children falling off equipment and striking their heads on exposed footings.
5. Shade is essential in preventing overheating of surface materials and play equipment in warm and sunny environments.

ENVIRONMENT & EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

1. Play areas for children come in many different sizes, shapes, and forms. Play space is thermally comfortable. Comfort is influenced by the element's visitors view, whether it's safe and secure, and weather people feel welcome.
2. The play area has been maintained. Clean play areas for children are more visually appealing. Plastic equipment may crack or develop holes due to temperature extremes and/or vandalism. Wood structures must be treated on a regular basis to avoid weather related problems such as splinters. Splintering can cause serious injuries to children.
3. Foreign objects, such as trash, loose ropes, tree limbs, and others can lead to injuries and unsafe situations. Trash can attract pests that carry diseases. Litter can disrupt wildlife habitats and food sources. Sharp objects like broken glass can be a safety hazard.
4. Strangulation is the leading cause of playground fatalities. Deaths have occurred when drawstrings on sweatshirts, coats, and other clothing get caught in gaps. Pay close attention to the area on top of slides and swings.
5. Entrapment places include between guardrails and underneath merry-go-rounds. Head entrapment occurs when the body fits through a space but the child's head cannot pass through the same space. This occurs because generally, young children's heads are larger than their bodies. If the space between two parts (usually guardrails) is more than 3.5 inches then it must be greater than 9 inches to avoid potential entrapment.
6. Protruding bolts or fixtures can cause problems with children running into equipment or catching clothing. Therefore, they pose a potential safety hazard.
7. Broken or missing equipment pieces are accidents waiting to happen. If a piece of equipment is broken, measures need to be taken to repair the piece. Children should be kept off the equipment until repaired.