

PLAYGROUND REPORT CARD

Does Your Playground Make the Grade?

Questions for playground owners, operators, administrators, designers, educators and users to keep children safe for all seasons of play.

Directions: Check your playground using the following questions. Answer 'Yes' or 'No' for each statement below. Explanations of the questions are described on the back of this sheet. If any of the highlighted boxes* are marked 'NO', the potential of a life-threatening injury is significantly increased. Contact the owner/operator.

SITE LOCATION	YES	NO
Location of the playground is protected from motorized hazards*		
Children can be easily viewed on equipment and throughout the playground		
The site location is designed to encourage active supervision		
Shade (natural, structure, building) is available at least 70% of time during play		
Signs are posted to check surfacing and equipment temperatures		
APPROPRIATE DESIGN	YES	NO
The playground area is designed for air movement for increased thermal comfort		
Trees, plants, or other appropriate landscaping is present		
The playground has a variety of play experiences for different ages of children		
Placement of equipment does not interfere with other play activities		
Play equipment is designed to discourage children from climbing outside the structure*		
Platforms allow children to change directions for getting off of the play structure		
Accessible routes are present allowing children to access the playground and equipment		
FALL AREA PROTECTION	YES	NO
Suitable surfacing materials are present		
Appropriate depth of loose fill material is present*		
Use zones have appropriate surfacing*		
Concrete footings are covered*		
Shade limits temperatures of surfaces during prolonged sun exposure		
ENVIRONMENT & EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE	YES	NO
The play area is inviting to users		
The play area is well-maintained		
The playground and equipment are free from foreign objects		
Equipment is free from strangulation hazards*		
Equipment is free of head entrapment hazards*		
Equipment is free of protruding bolts and fixtures		
Equipment is free of broken or missing parts		
TOTAL POINTS		

SCORING SYSTEM

For every 'Yes' your playground receives one point. Total up the number of points for each section.

____ Site Location

____ Appropriate Design

____ Fall Area Protection

____ Equipment Maintenance

____ Total

A: 24-19

Congratulations, the playground is likely safe and thermally comfortable.

B: 18-15

The playground is on its way to providing a safe and thermally comfortable play area. Work on the areas checked 'No'.

C: 14-11

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

D: 10-7

The play area potentially has unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Start today to make plans for improvements.

F: 6 & below

Make decisions for improvements for safe and healthy play for children.



NPPAS

NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR PLAY AREA SAFETY

PlaygroundSafety.org

EXPLANATION OF THE RISK FACTORS

SITE LOCATION

1. A form of a secure barrier should be provided around play areas to protect children from adjacent roads and nearby busy streets.
2. To properly supervise children, the playground design must permit for them to be seen and heard.
3. Since equipment can't supervise children, the layout is designed to allow for supervision.
4. During the warm months, direct sunlight for long periods of the summer days can heat up surfaces and raise ambient air temperature; strategically placed shade — like trees, shade sails, canopies- helps keep things cool.
5. Post a sign telling parents or users to press the back of their hand to the play surface for a few seconds to confirm it's safe for before play — if it feels too hot, wait or seek shaded areas.

APPROPRIATE DESIGN

1. Wind can significantly affect thermal comfort. Understanding the wind direction throughout the year at the site will help in orientating the play equipment and amenities. Refer to *Fundamentals for Thermal Comfort and Safety: Designing Climate-Ready Playgrounds* for more information.
2. Trees and landscaping can improve thermal comfort by reducing solar radiation and lowering air and surface temperature.
3. It is recommended for playgrounds to have separate areas with appropriately sized equipment and materials. In playgrounds designed to serve children of all ages, the layout of pathways and the landscaping can support age-appropriate play and thermal comfort.
4. Placement of equipment, such as swings and moving play elements, should not interfere with other play activities.
5. Either guardrails or protective barriers may be used to prevent inadvertent or unintentional falls off elevated platforms.
6. Playground equipment platforms over 6 ft | 1.8 meters 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 play equipment.

FALL AREA PROTECTION

1. Research has shown playground equipment height can double the probability of a child getting injured. Falls from 1 foot | 30.48 centimeters onto concrete could cause a serious head injury. Use zones of elevated play equipment should have a protective surface. Appropriate surfaces are either a playground surfacing loose-fill or unitary material. Inappropriate surface materials, directly under elevated playground equipment, are asphalt, concrete, dirt, or grass.
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. NPPAS suggests 12 inches | 30.48 centimeters of loose fill material under and around playground equipment for initial installment.
3. Appropriate surfacing should be located directly underneath equipment and extend 6 ft | 1.8 meters 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. During warm months and sunny days, shade is essential in preventing surfaces from overheating.

ENVIRONMENT & EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

1. The playground is inviting and inclusive.
2. The playground has been maintained. Clean playgrounds 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.
3. Foreign objects, such as trash, loose ropes, drawstrings, and helmets 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. 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. A playground entrapment occurs when a child's body, body part, clothing, or accessory becomes stuck in an opening or gap in playground equipment, and they can't free themselves. These hazards are especially dangerous when they involve the head or neck, as they can lead to strangulation or suffocation. If the space between two parts (usually guardrails) is more than 3.5 inches | 8.89 centimeters then it must be greater than 9 inches | 22.86 centimeters to avoid potential entrapment.
6. Protruding bolts or fixtures can cause problems with children running into equipment or catching clothing.
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.