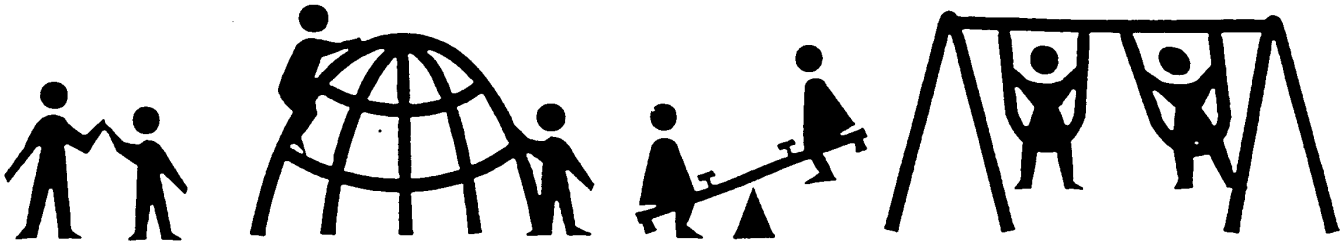
America's Playgrounds

Safety Report Card



DOES YOUR PLAYGROUND MAKE THE GRADE?

Evaluate your playground using the following criteria.
A full explanation of the criteria is on the back of this sheet.

	Yes	No
SUPERVISION		
Adults present when children are on equipment		
Children can be easily viewed on equipment		
Children can be viewed in crawl spaces		
Rules posted regarding expected behavior		
AGE-APPROPRIATE DESIGN		
Playgrounds have separate areas for ages 2-5 and 5-12		
Platforms have appropriate guardrails		
Platforms allow change of directions to get on/off structure		
Signage indicating age group for equipment provided		
Equipment design prevents climbing outside the structure		
Supporting structure prevents climbing on it		
FALL SURFACING		
Suitable surfacing materials provided		
Height of all equipment is 8 feet or lower		
Appropriate depth of loose fill provided		
Six foot use zone has appropriate surfacing		
Concrete footings are covered		
Surface free of foreign objects		
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE		
Equipment is free of noticeable gaps		
Equipment is free of head entrapments		
Equipment is free of broken parts		
Equipment is free of missing parts		
Equipment is free of protruding bolts		
Equipment is free of rust		
Equipment is free of splinters		
Equipment is free of cracks/holes		
TOTAL POINTS		

SCORING SYSTEM

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

24 – 20 = A
Congratulations on having a SAFE playground. Please continue to maintain this excellence.

19 – 17 = B
Your playground is on its way to providing a safe environment for children. Work on the areas checked 'No'.

16 – 13 = C
Your playground is potentially hazardous for children. Take corrective measures.

12 – 8 = D
Children are at risk on this playground. Start to make improvements.

7 & = F
Do not allow children on this playground. Make changes immediately.

****If any of the gray boxes are marked 'NO', the potential of a life-threatening injury is significantly increased. Contact the owner of the playground.**

For Additional Resources and Information Contact:
National Program for Playground Safety: 1-800-554-PLAY (7529) ~ www.playgroundsafety.org

Explanation of Risk Factor Criteria

SUPERVISION

*****1. Since equipment can't supervise children, it is important that adult supervision is present when children are playing on the playground.

2. In order to properly supervise, children need to be seen. This question is asking if there are any blind spots where children can hide out of the sight of the supervisor.

3. Many crawl spaces, tunnels, and boxed areas have plexiglas or some type of transparent material present to allow the supervisor to see that a child is inside the space. When blind tunnels are present, children cannot be properly supervised.

4. Rules help reinforce expected behavior. Therefore, the posting of playground rules is recommended. For children, ages 2-5, no more than three rules should be posted. Children over the age of five will remember five rules. These rules should be general in nature, such as "respect each other and take turns."

AGE APPROPRIATE DESIGN

*1. It is recommended that playgrounds have separate areas with appropriately sized equipment and materials to serve ages 2-5 and ages 5-12. Further, the intended user group should be obvious from the design and scale of equipment. In playgrounds designed to serve children of all ages, the layout of pathways and the landscaping of the playground should show the distinct areas for the different age groups. The areas should be separated at least by a buffer zone, which could be an area with shrubs or benches.

*2. Either guardrails or protective barriers may be used to prevent inadvertent or unintentional falls off elevated platforms. However, to provide greater protection, protective barriers should be designed to prevent intentional attempts by children.

3. Platforms over six feet in height should provide an intermediate standing surface where a decision can be made to halt the ascent or to pursue an alternative means of descent.

4. Signs posted in the playground area can be used to give some guidance to adults as to the age appropriateness of equipment.

5. Children use equipment in creative ways which are not necessarily what the manufacturer intended when designing the piece. Certain equipment pieces, like high tube slides, can put the child at risk if they can easily climb on the outside of the piece. The answer to this question is a judgment on your part as to whether the piece was designed to minimize risk to the child for injury from a fall.

6. Support structures such as long poles, bars, swing frames, etc. become the play activity. The problem is that many times these structures have no safe surfacing underneath and children fall from dangerous heights to hard surfaces.

FALL SURFACING

*****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 1 ft. 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.

*****2. Research has shown that equipment heights can double the probability of a child getting injured. We recommend that the height of equipment for pre-school age children be no higher than 6 feet and the height of equipment for school age children be limited to 8 feet.

*****3. Proper loose fill surfacing must be at the appropriate depth to cushion falls. An inch of sand upon hard packed dirt will not provide any protection. We recommend 12 inches of loose fill material under and around playground equipment.

*****4. 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.

*****5. You should not be able to see concrete footings around any of the equipment. Deaths or permanent disabilities have occurred from children falling off equipment and striking their heads on exposed footings.

6. Glass, bottle caps, needles, trash, etc. can also cause injury if present on playground surfaces.

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

*****1. Strangulation is the leading cause of playground fatalities. Some of these deaths occur when drawstrings on sweatshirts, coats, and other clothing get caught in gaps in the equipment. The area on top of slides is one potential trouble spot.

*****2. 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 three and a half inches then it must be greater than nine inches to avoid potential entrapment.

*3. Broken equipment pieces are accidents waiting to happen. If a piece of equipment is broken, measures need to be taken to repair the piece. In the meantime, children should be kept off the equipment.

*4. Missing parts also create a playground hazard. A rung missing from a ladder, which is the major access point onto a piece of equipment, poses an unnecessary injury hazard for the child.

5. Protruding bolts or fixtures can cause problems with children running into equipment or catching clothing. Therefore, they pose a potential safety hazard.

6. Exposed metal will rust. This weakens the equipment and will eventually create a serious playground hazard.

7. Wood structures must be treated on a regular basis to avoid weather related problems such as splinters. Splintering can cause serious injuries to children.

8. Plastic equipment may crack or develop holes due to temperature extremes and/or vandalism. This is a playground hazard.

***If these risk factors are missing, the potential for a life-threatening injury is significantly increased.**