

APPENDIX to

Play and Development

Joe L. Frost

Sue C. Wortham

Stuart Reifel

2001, Merrill Prentice Hall

PLAYGROUND RATING SYSTEM

© 1997 Joe L. Frost (revised)

Used by permission of Joe L. Frost

Rate each item for existence and function on a scale from 1 to 5

0 = nonexistent

1 = some elements exist but not functional

2 = poor

3 = average

4 = good

5 = all elements exist: excellent function

Divide the final total score (out of a possible 300) by 3 to obtain final rating (out of a possible 100)

Note: This rating scale is not intended as a research tool but as an aid to planning and evaluating playgrounds.

Playground Rating System

© 1997 Joe L. Frost (revised)
Used by permission of Joe L. Frost

Score	Section I: What does the playground contain?
	1. A hard-surfaced area with space for games and a network of paths for wheeled toys
	2. Sand and sand play equipment
	3. Water play areas with fountains, pools, and sprinklers, and water play equipment
	4. Dramatic play structures) playhouse, car or boat with complimentary equipment, such as adjacent sand and water, and housekeeping equipment
	5. A superstructure with room for many children at a time and with a variety of challenges and exercise options (entries, exits, and valleys)
	6. Mound(s) of earth for climbing and digging
	7. Trees and natural areas for shade, nature study, and play
	8. Continuous challenge, linkage of areas, functional physical boundaries, and vertical and horizontal treatment (hills and valleys)
	9. Construction area with junk materials such as tires, crates, planks, boards, bricks, and nails; tools provided and demolition and construction allowed
	10. A purchased or built vehicle, airplane, boat, or car that has been made safe, but not stripped of its play value (should be changed or relocated after a period of time to renew interest)
	11. Equipment for active play (a variety of overhead apparatus, climbers, slides, balancing devices, swings, etc.)
	12. A large soft area (grass, bark, mulch, etc.) for organized games; a concrete or asphalt area for organized games
	13. Small semiprivate spaces at the child's own scale (tunnels, niches, playhouses, hiding places)
	14. Fences, gates, walls, and windows that provide security for young children and are adaptable for learning/play
	15. A garden for flowers located so that they are protected from play, but with easy access for children to tend them; garden tools
	16. Provisions for housing of pets; pets and supplies available
	17. A transitional space from outdoors to indoor. This could be a covered play area immediately adjoining the playroom, which will protect the children from the sun and rain and extend indoor activities to the outside
	18. Storage for outdoor play equipment, tools for construction and garden area, and maintenance tools. Storage can be separate: wheeled toys stored near the wheeled vehicle trace; sand equipment near the sand enclosure; tools near the construction area. Storage can be next to the building or fence. Storage should

Score	Section I. What does the playground contain? (continued)
	aid in children's picking up and putting away equipment at the end of each play period
	19. Easy access from outdoor play areas to coats, toilets, and drinking fountains; shaded areas, benches, tables, and support materials for group activities (art, reading, etc.)
	20. Accessibility, materials, and equipment for children of all abilities/disabilities
	SUBTOTAL OUT OF 100 POINTS
Score	Section II. Is the playground in good repair and relatively safe?
	1. A protective fence (with lockable gates) next to hazardous areas (streets, deep ditches, water, etc.)
	2. Eight to 12 inches of noncompacted sand, wood mulch or equivalent manufactured surfacing under all climbing and moving equipment, extending through fall zones and secured by retaining wall as needed
	3. Size of equipment appropriate to age group served; climbing heights limited to 6 to 7 feet, or just above standing/reaching height of children
	4. Area free of litter (e.g., broken glass), electrical hazards, high-voltage power lines, and toxic hazards
	5. Moving parts free of defects (e.g., no pinch and crush points, bearings not excessively worn)
	6. Equipment free of sharp edges and broken, loose, and missing parts
	7. Swing seats constructed of soft or lightweight material (e.g., rubber, plastic)
	8. All safety equipment in good repair (e.g., guardrails, padded areas, protective covers)
	9. No openings that can entrap a child's head (approximately 3.5' by 9"). See CPSC/ ASTM for measurements and tests)
	10. Equipment structurally sound; no bending, warping, breaking, sinking, etc; heavy fixed and moving equipment secured in ground and concrete footings recessed underground at least 4 inches
	11. Adequate space between equipment—typically 6 to 9 feet, depending on type of equipment (see CPSC/ ASTM)
	12. No signs of underground rotting, rusting, or termites in support members (probe underground)
	13. No metal slides or decks exposed to sun; use plastic components or place in permanent shade
	14. Guardrail and protective barriers in place that meet CPSC/ ASTM height and other requirements
	15. No loose ropes, suspended ropes, or cables in movement area
	16. All balance beams, cables and chains at low heights—prescribed by CPSC/ASTM
	17. Signs at entry alerting to appropriate ages of users, need for

	adult supervision, and any hazards
	18. No protrusion or entanglement hazards
	19. No tripping hazards—exposed concrete footings
	20. No water hazards—access to pools, creeks. No traffic hazards—streets, parking lots, delivery areas
	SUBTOTAL OUT OF 100 POINTS
Score	Section III. What should the playground (and the Play leader) do?
	1. Encourage play: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inviting, easy access ▪ Open, flowing and relaxed space ▪ Clear, movement from indoors to outdoors ▪ Appropriate equipment for the age group(s)
	2. Stimulates the child's senses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changes and contrasts in scale, light, texture and color ▪ Flexible equipment ▪ Diverse experiences
	3. Nurtures the child's curiosity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equipment that the child can change ▪ Materials for experiments and construction ▪ Plants and animals
	4. Supports the child's social and physical needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comfortable to the child ▪ Scaled to the child ▪ Physically challenging
	5. Allows interaction between the child and the resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systematic storage that defines routine ▪ Semienclosed spaces to read, work a puzzle, or be alone
	6. Allows interaction between children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Variety of spaces ▪ Adequate space to avoid conflicts ▪ Equipment that invites socialization
	7. Allow interaction between the child and adults: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organization of spaces to allow general supervision ▪ Rest areas for adults and children
	8. Supports functional, exercise, gross motor, active play
	9. Supports constructive, building, creating play
	10. Supports dramatic, pretend, make-believe play
	11. Supports organized games and games with rules

This is an overview of relevant safety items. For details, refer to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission's *Public Playground Handbook for Safety* and the American Society for Testing Material's *Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use*

	12. Supports special play form (e.g., chase games, rough-and-tumble, sand and water play)
	13. Promotes solitary, private, meditative play
	14. Promotes group, cooperative, sharing play
	15. Involves children in care and maintenance of playground
	16. Involves adults in children's play and work/play activities—art, music, science, etc.
	19. Adults are trained in play value, playground maintenance and safety, emergency procedures
	20. The play environment is constantly changing—growing in challenge and complexity. Good playgrounds are never finished
	SUBTOTAL OUT OF 100 POINTS
	GRAND TOTAL OUT OF 300 POINTS
	Grand Total divide by 3= SCORE