

Playground Supervision



A Guide to Safely Supervising Students on the Playground

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You are Important ! Your Job is Important !

Some children are swinging, some are playing tetherball, and yet others are engaged in a game of chase. They range in age from six to 12 years old. All have different personalities, backgrounds and abilities (both physical and social).

Your job – ensure the children play safely.

The safety of children in the classroom and on the playground is an essential element of the quality of the learning environment.

**YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT PART
OF PROVIDING THAT SAFE
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.**



Why Do Children Play ?

Simply put, play is a child's way of learning.

The children aren't only swinging, playing tetherball or chasing each other. They are learning.

An understanding of why children play and why play is important will help the playground supervisor improve the play environment by making it safe, fun and a quality learning experience.

Good quality play opportunities have a significant impact on child development.

The children on the swing aren't simply swinging. They are learning about their physical abilities and limitations. They are learning social skills, how to get along with others and teamwork. They are learning decision making and are developing motor skills. They are engaged in fantasy play or "make believe".

At the same time, the children should be safe and having FUN.

Play Equipment

Without taking risks, children cannot learn to their full potential. Play equipment must challenge them to take risks without being hazardous.

Play equipment and play activities should offer challenges and opportunities. It should provide for risk taking.

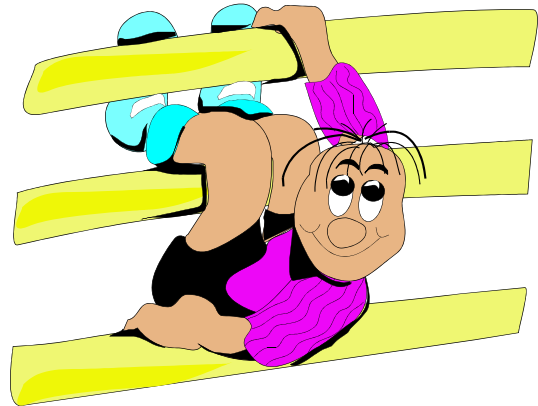
Children will use equipment and parts of the environment in all possible ways, regardless of the design intentions. Since the idea of play is to explore the potential of the play environment, children will test the equipment beyond the limits of their abilities.

The testing should present a challenge. It teaches new skills.

This “testing” can sometimes put children in situations that compromise their safety.

It is your job to help guide children away from those unsafe situations.

Play equipment should NOT be hazardous and should NOT have unforeseen consequences.



Hazard vs. Challenge

A **challenge** is something a child can see, recognize the consequences of failure but chooses to attempt. The child can make the decision to attempt a challenge. A challenge stimulates or excites.

A **hazard** is the unforeseen consequence of a child's inability to handle a challenge. A hazard is a hidden or unexpected source of danger.

Hazards can result from a poorly designed equipment feature such as inadequate guardrails, equipment installed too close together and inadequate fall cushioning material under the equipment.

Hazards can also result from poor maintenance. A worn metal slide bed may cut a child. A worn swing chain can break, causing a serious injury.

Hazards can also result from poor supervision. Too many children playing on the same piece of equipment may cause injuries. Children not following playground rules can cause injuries. Children playing on equipment not appropriate for their age may cause injuries.

Are Playgrounds Hazardous ?

YES !

There are more student injuries on playgrounds than anywhere else at schools. One million playground accidents occur each year in the United States.

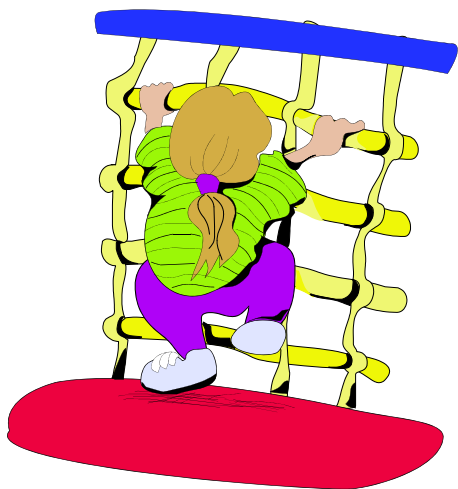
The most common causes of accidents are :

1. Falls from higher levels to lower levels.
2. Running into equipment.
3. Being hit by moving equipment.
4. Getting pinched, stuck or cut on equipment.

Playground injuries most commonly occur on climbers, swings and slides.

Age of Children vs. Accidents

The age of a child and the likelihood of the child being injured on the playground are, statistically at least, related. 44% of children injured on playgrounds are ages 8 to 9. 38 % are ages 5 to 7 and 18% are ages 10 to 12.



Your Duties and Responsibilities

1. Visually inspect the equipment and grounds.

- a. Check the equipment for broken pieces, sharp edges, worn parts, etc.
- b. Check wood equipment for splinters, rotten wood and cracks.
- c. Check the grounds for large holes, broken glass and other foreign objects that may injure a child.

It is especially important to look for safety hazards after weekends and holidays. After school hours use of playgrounds can result in damaged and vandalized equipment. It can also lead to foreign objects being left on the grounds.

Immediately report unsafe equipment!

Don't let children use unsafe equipment!

Immediately report unsafe grounds!



2. Control student activities and behavior.

- a. Know the playground safety rules the children are to follow.
- b. Be firm.
- c. Be fair. Children (even very young ones) know about fair.
- d. Know what's safe and what's not safe.
- e. Use a child's name if you know it. They will respond better.
- f. Use the whistle sparingly. Constantly blowing the whistle decreases its effectiveness.
- g. Use the perimeter of the play area to observe children. You can watch more children from the perimeter than any other place on the playground.



Conflict Resolution

1. Know the rules.
2. Be firm when enforcing the rules.
3. Be fair when enforcing the rules. The rules are for all children, not just the troublesome ones.
4. Act promptly and decisively. Enforcing a rule that was broken an hour ago isn't effective.

You are Responsible for ALL the Children

Don't get involved with small groups of children. You can't supervise all the children if a small group has your attention.

Don't let one child take all your attention, even if the child is troublesome or an angel. Remember, act promptly and decisively. Be fair with children and your time allotment to them.

Don't play. Your job is not to entertain. It is to supervise.

Don't visit. Visit with other staff during breaks and at times when you are not supervising children. You are jeopardizing safety when you are not paying direct attention to children.

NEVER leave the play area. Take care of getting drinks and restroom stops before going on duty. Notify your supervisor if you MUST leave the area so a replacement can be assigned BEFORE you leave.

Know How to Correct Safety Hazards

If you can correct a safety hazard, do so. Otherwise, know to whom you should report safety hazards.

Report all safety hazards no matter how minor they may seem. A minor hazard can cause a painful injury, and a minor hazard today can become a serious hazard tomorrow.



Remember, make a special check of the play equipment and grounds after weekends and holidays.

Responding to Emergencies and Accidents

The school site has a plan and procedures for responding to emergencies and accidents.

FOLLOW THE PLAN AND USE THE PROCEDURES !

Be alert at all times. Act promptly and decisively.



Emergency First Aid and CPR

Knowledge of first aid and CPR procedures may become very important on the playground.

Knowledge of emergency first aid and CPR may also become very important at home and other places away from the playground.

Intruders

An intruder on the playground is ANYONE you don't recognize and ANYONE not authorized on the playground.

Report intruders immediately.

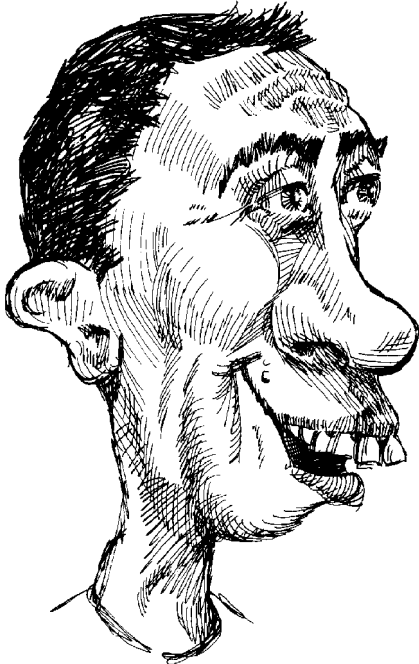
A parent may be an intruder if they first have not registered at the office and obtained a visitor pass.

A person adjacent to the play area who doesn't appear to have business in the area may become an intruder.

Remember, be alert.

If possible, note a description of the intruder, direction of travel, what they were doing, vehicle color, make and license plate number. All this information may be important later.

Being careful is better than being sorry.



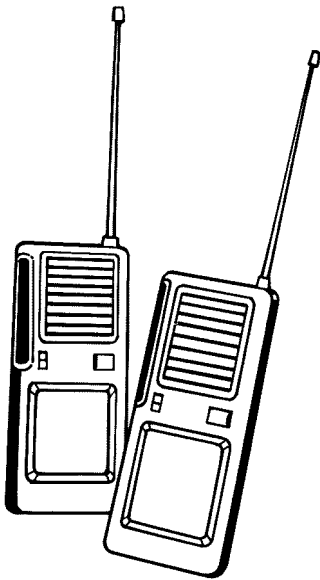
Your Equipment

- 1. A whistle or megaphone.**
 - a. These are used to control and gain the attention of children.
 - b. USE BOTH SPAREINGLY
- 2. A note pad and pencil**
 - a. These are used to help you remember the names of troublesome children or children who may deserve a reward for being especially good.
 - b. Intruder descriptions should be noted.
 - c. Safety hazards should be noted.
- 3. Comfortable shoes**
 - a. Flat, closed toe shoes with good arch support are important.
 - b. Good support is important since you are usually walking and may be on an uneven surface.
- 4. Hat, sun screen and UV sun glasses**
 - a. If you are outdoors, protect yourself from the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun.
- 5. Safety vest or some other colorful identifier.**
 - a. It may be difficult to identify you in a crowd if you are wearing street clothes.
 - b. Other playground supervisors need to know where you are on the playground.

- c. Students need to know where you are on the playground.
- d. Parents need to know their children are being supervised.

6. A hand held radio or other means of communicating.

- a. Communications with other supervisors and the office may be very important, especially in an emergency.
- b. If radios are not available, develop another way to communicate. Soccer referees communicate effectively with players, other referees and spectators by raising yellow and red cards.



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