

10 – Step Guide to Planning Your Playground



Planning your playground is an important job and you will likely have many questions along the way. This guide aims to help answer many of your questions as well as provide you with educational resources.

Form a Committee

Building a playground is a job for your entire community. Play brings people together, so start by gathering local residents, organizations and professionals to help tackle the different facets of building a playground.

It's then helpful to form committees for every phase of the project. Committee skills can be divided to help with organization, fundraising, design, child development and education, ground maintenance, general construction and public relations. Diverse expertise will help your project along much faster than trying to do it all yourself.



Determine Project Objectives

To begin, your first meeting should aim to define the main objectives of the project. Your answers to the following questions will help focus your decisions and criteria for your playground:

Users: Who will be using this playground? What is the age range? Are there any users with physical disabilities?

Space: How much space do you have to work with? Are there existing playground pieces in place? What kind of access is available to and from the space?

Budget: How much can you afford to spend? Are you limited to a specific amount, or will you be able to add to an initial amount through fundraising activities? What does your budget cover? The cost of the equipment only, or must it also include site preparation, freight charges, protective surfacing, installation, etc.?

Expenses to Consider:

- Site Preparation – Includes items like permits, installing sidewalks, lighting, grading and drainage.
- Play Equipment – The list or purchase price of the playground equipment.
- Equipment Shipping and Storage – The shipping cost of getting the equipment from the manufacturer to your site. If the site is not prepared, you may need to store the equipment until installation day. If storage is not on-site, you may need to allow for another shipping cost.
- Surfacing – The list or purchase price of the surfacing material.
- Surfacing Shipping – The price for shipping the surfacing from the manufacturer to your site.
- Installation – The price of installing the playground equipment (will typically include consumable construction materials like concrete, gravel and sand).

Timeframe: What is the timeframe for the project? Do you have a deadline for completing the playground? (This may be a good time to set up a tentative schedule for planning, review, equipment purchase, site preparation and installation.)

Measuring success: How will you measure the success of your project? Count the number of kids using it? Survey kids, parents and neighbouring residents? Track maintenance time and costs against initial expectations?



Find a playground consultant who you can trust with every aspect of the playground building process, from planning to installation and all points in between!

Choose a Professional Partner

The Playground Guys have built a strong network of trained and certified sales representatives in Western Canada to work with you one-on-one to brainstorm, design, and build the best playspace you could imagine. Our team provides the following services:

- FREE site evaluation and inspection
- FREE custom playground design and layout
- FREE safety and risk management consultation
- FREE accessibility consultation
- FREE budgeting and fundraising advice
- Provide assistance in coordinating installation services
- Provide assistance on a custom maintenance program



Analyze the Site

When analyzing the site consult with the people who will be maintaining the playground after it's built as well as those who will be affected by it—children, parents, teachers, neighbourhood residents as they can help provide answers to the following :

Topography: The slope of your site is the most critical element you need to consider. Even a site that looks level may have significant elevation changes that can affect drainage. It is important that surface water drains away from your playground.

Soil: Soil conditions will influence the stability and drainage of your playground. Understanding the four basic soil types: sandy, clay, loam and organic matter soils; will help determine any soil acidity, stability, and drainage issues that could occur. A landscape architect or one of our Playground Guys can provide guidance on any soil-related issues.

Vegetation: Existing vegetation can enhance the perimeter of a play area by providing shade and a more aesthetically pleasing environment. But it is also important to consider what pests the plants you choose may attract. As you will want to avoid using pesticides in areas near where children will play. You also want to avoid thorny or prickly plants. If you plan on adding vegetation you may want to consult with a gardener or landscape architect to help choose a variety of plants to attract birds, provide colour or blooms in different seasons, and plants that best complement each other.

Utilities: It is important to build your playground in a safe zone with buffer areas between possible hazards such as power and telephone lines. But there are also lines underground you need to consider, so it is important to call electric, gas, telephone and cable TV providers before drawing up your plans. As well you should consult your city's engineering department for water and sewer locations just in case.

Circulation and Access: When deciding on the layout of your play area, we recommend giving thought to proximity to roads, parking, ease of access, pedestrian and bicycle paths, site furnishings and rest rooms. Also consider providing adequate security in the form of emergency telephones, ease of adult supervision and visibility from the street.

Selecting Equipment

When selecting specific events, we recommend you consider:

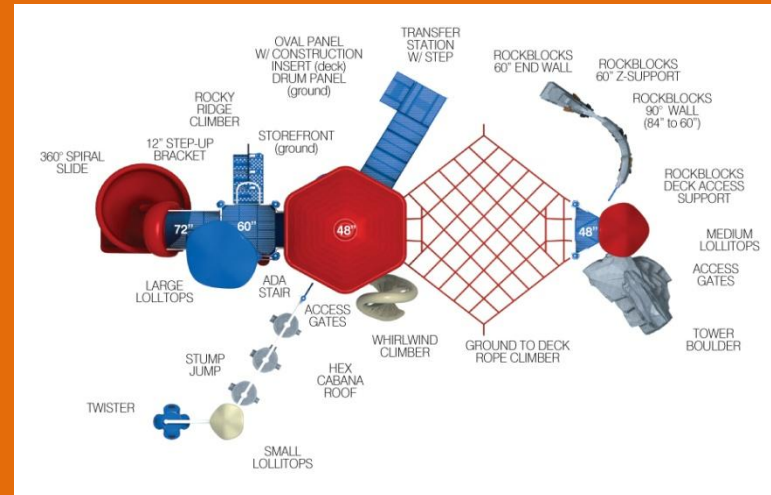
- Age-appropriateness
- Variety of activities
- Developmental benefits
- Liability issues
- Cost
- Equal opportunity for all potential users to access

Modular Playsystems

Custom create the perfect playspace with our wide variety of play solutions. Playworld Systems play equipment makes it easy for you to pick and choose components to facilitate users in their favourite activities. This connection of play components can offer a wide variety of activity, social interaction, and play challenges and exploration. A well-designed structure can accommodate a large number of children in a relatively small area.

Pre-Planned Playsystems

Finding the perfect playground is easy with our wide range of pre-planned play solutions. Consult with our representatives on existing pre-designs that could fit all you play objectives. The design work is already handled for you. Just select your favourite design and go!



Selecting Equipment - Continued

Stand-Alone Products

Swings, climbers, sandboxes, free-standing slides, and spring riders are typical of independent play activities that can be added to enhance a playspace.

Site Amenities

Benches, Tables, Receptacles are all site amenities that can be used to make a space more inviting or complete the recreational needs of users.

Appearance

Do you want playground equipment that blends into its surroundings, or do you prefer a structure that makes a bold statement? What shapes will look best on your playground?

Safety

It is important to consider safety certification by whichever manufacturer you use. The Playground Guys ensures that all playground equipment supplied by our company, not only meets but is also Certified by IPEMA to the Canadian Standard CAN/CSA-Z614-07 which ensures that your children and grandchildren are playing on the safest equipment available. Please see our Safety & Certification form for more details on the products we offer.

Materials

Consider the materials used in the equipment you are contemplating. We do not provide any wood products as wood cracks very easily, and requires significant maintenance. Some steel products rust quickly in damp or salty areas, making aluminum or stainless steel a better choice for structural parts. Eco-Armour is Playworld's long-lasting, thermoplastic Polyethylene (PE) coating —the 100% recyclable, durable alternative to traditional PVC coatings. PE coatings like Eco-Armour average a 38% lower carbon footprint than PVC coatings and are safe and easy to dispose of. Eco-Armour is also phthalate free, lead free, and cadmium free, making it safe for our environment and our health. We supply products that are double coated with a Polyester Powder Coating, providing enhanced, light-stable pigments for superior UV stability and fade resistance. And the plastic parts used are made of high-quality pigment resins to prevent color fading and UV-degradation.



Surfacing

Hard surfacing such as asphalt and concrete are not considered suitable for use under and around playground equipment other than as a base for installation or for shock absorbency. According to the Canadian Standards Association for playgrounds there are two distinct categories of approved playground safety surfacing: unitary and loose-fill.

Loose-Fill options consist of engineered certified wood fibre, sand and pea gravel. We supply wood fibre options and can help you coordinate the purchase of bulk materials like pea gravel and sand if you prefer to use that. Most importantly we adhere to minimum critical height values based on CSA standards and will ensure you purchase the right depth of protective material.

We also provide unitary options like SofSURFACES SofTile KrosLOCK. These shock absorbing, resilient tiles, provide a guaranteed critical height value and require little maintenance. The best part is that they can add aesthetic flare to your playspace as they come in an array of colour options to create a floor design of your choice.



The Plan

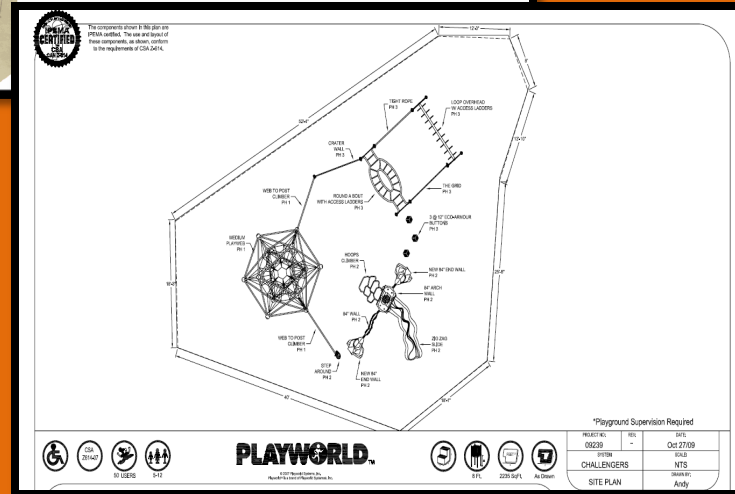
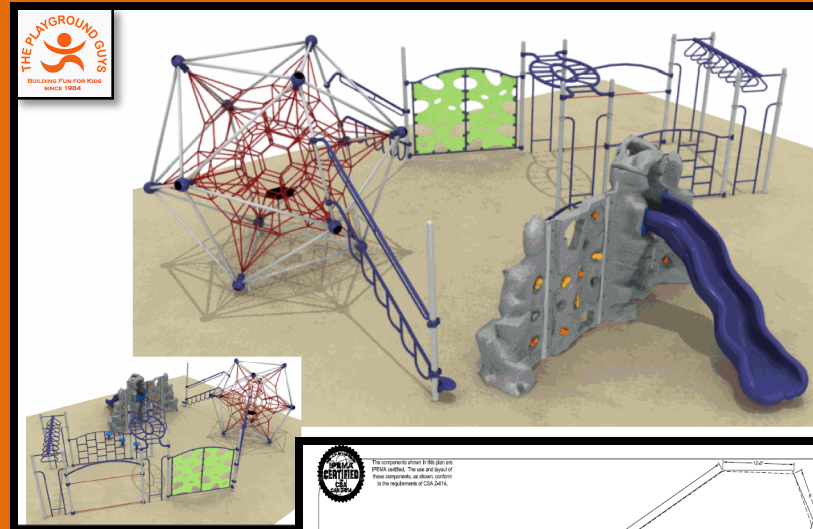
Consult a **Playground Guy** in your area and our team will be able to provide you with the following for your plan:

Full Proposal Presentation – Our rep can provide you with a full proposal to discuss possible options in any format you require, including rich multimedia

Scale Design – Our designers can provide you with a site plan that shows site boundaries, dimensions, orientation, component details, and safety specifications

3-D Images – With our CAD scale designs we also supply 3-D images from different views of your design. If requested we can provide you with promotional material including posters to help with fundraising events

Costs – Once the design and surfacing choices are made our reps can provide you with a breakdown of costs and consult on potential costs to consider with installation and site preparation



Final Order Decisions



Before you sign the sales contract or issue a purchase order, you'll want to carefully review the following:

1. Review all the designs presented to you and the specifications of each with your facilities team, committee and any other parties who are entitled to have say on the final decision
2. Ensure that you have obtained any required permits or approvals
3. The final decision on what you want to buy and whom from should come from the person or committee that has been most involved in the planning process and measuring its success
4. Confirm the design you want, any additional components, the colours of your equipment, and surfacing choice



Site Preparation & Installation

Budget requirements usually mean that site preparation and installation decisions are made during planning stages.

Some choices are:

- ❖ **Community Build** – uses volunteers and the supervision of a professional installer to prepare and install
- ❖ **Professional Installers** – site preparation and full installation by an insured and factory certified crew
- ❖ **Combination** – site preparation by your own workers, followed by the professional assembly and installation of equipment

*If you're interested in doing a community build or combination, consult your Playground Guy Rep and they can provide you with details on these options.

Site Preparation

- **Remove old equipment-** Depending on the age and condition of your equipment, you might be able to donate it. Be sure to conduct a safety audit of existing equipment before making the decision to pass it on. If you're disposing your equipment, contact local recycling centers to find out how you can recycle scrap material for future use.
- **Level the site surface-** For maximum safety and usability, all inclines greater than 1-2% grade should be levelled, unless your playground design has allowed for grade changes.
- **Mark all underground utilities-** Typically, your local gas, water, and power companies will perform this service for you.
- **Stake use zones-** The amount of space required around and between equipment. Your Playworld representative can provide a use zone blueprint for you during the design phase.
- **Dig holes-** Your Playground Guy representative will provide footing diagrams detailing the size and location of each hole your playground design requires. For playgrounds with more than 15 holes, a power auger will save you a lot of time and energy.

Site Prep. & Installation Continued

Delivery

Once your equipment is ready for shipment, your Playground Guy Rep will notify you of the delivery date. If your installation is not scheduled to happen on the delivery day, you'll want to find a secure location to store the equipment. When the equipment arrives ensure to check the inventory with the checklist provided by the delivery driver.

Assembly & Installation

If you're doing a community build, your Playground Guy Rep can provide you with a supervisory consultation for your volunteers as they handle bigger tools, large components, and more technical tasks. If you have a professional team working on it then you may just want have one of your committee representatives' check-in with them throughout the installation to stay informed on any issues or any possible delays.

Site Security

Once the playground is built and the concrete is poured, the site must be secured for 72 hours to allow the concrete to dry. Prominently post bright boundary tape, orange temporary fencing, and signage to keep kids away from the equipment and out of the playspace.

Surfacing

After the concrete has dried, your surfacing will be installed to ensure that all use zones are properly covered. Some surfacing materials, like loose fill wood fibre, may be installed at the time of the playground installation.

Site Review

A post-installation safety audit is critical for confirming that your playground has been installed to its specifications. Your Playground Guy Representative or certified installer should perform a final inspection and complete the job with a formal inspection certificate. He or she may also brief your maintenance crew so that they can become familiar with the components and inspection techniques.

Maintenance

A thorough and consistent maintenance plan is a critical feature of a safe playground. Inspecting all of your equipment regularly is strongly encouraged. Follow the manufacturer's maintenance recommendations and procedures. Manufacturers create these recommendations to ensure that their products will provide a safe area for children to play. Playworld Systems customizes maintenance kits for each individual playstructure purchase. This kit may help you determine maintenance frequency and guide you through the maintenance process.

Document your maintenance plan and keep a log of inspections and equipment repairs. This will not only help to keep the maintenance up-to-date and organized, but could come in handy pending any warranty or accident issues.

All accidents should not only be documented, but thoroughly investigated. This can help identify high-risk areas of your playground that you may wish to make changes to and can assist in preventing additional accidents from the same source.

Establish a key contact for playground issues like loose bolts, missing parts or broken items. This will ensure that these problems will be taken care of immediately. You should also post the contact person's information at the playground, so that if an issue or suggestion should arise, that the correct person will receive the information quickly.