



What Makes A Great Playground?

(NAPSA)—Creating a great playground is more than just child's play.

It needs to offer activities and equipment that stimulate children so that they're getting the most out of the experience.

"You will know it's a great place to play when your kids not only beg you to go, but beg you to stay longer," says Darell Hammond, CEO of KaBOOM!, a non-profit organization that envisions a great place to play within walking distance of every child.

Here's a list of suggested elements of a great play space:

Motion

A play space should encourage kids to run, jump, toss, throw, hop, slide, swing, climb and move. Play equipment should have moving parts: swings, activity panels and balance activities with movable parts.

Nature

A great play space should incorporate the natural world around it. A lot of green space is key for activity and such things as sand and water give kids a dynamic environment in which to use their manipulative skills.

Visually Intriguing

A playground should look, sound and feel interesting. Sound, color and texture excite the senses and ignite a child's imagination.

Overhead Events

This is a fancy term for anything that makes kids use their upper bodies. Monkey bars, monorails, chain ladders and the like encourage upper-body development.

Balance

Balance is an important skill for children to develop—and they usually have fun doing it. Playgrounds should have unusual balance elements to test kids' balancing savvy.



Kids love to play on great playgrounds that offer lots of opportunities for activity.

Multigenerational

A great play space should be appealing to the entire family. Everyone should want to go and use the facility. An ideal space has plenty of shade elements, picnic tables as well as benches.

Friendly Competition

Children are stimulated by friendly competition with their peers. Play spaces should be rich with subtle opportunities for a competition—be it parallel climbing bars where children can see who climbs across the fastest—or a double slide are good additions. So are spaces for such games as basketball and tetherball.

Accessibility

Play spaces should be accessible to everyone, providing playing areas at ground level and a safe surface for all.

Ground Cover

Look for soft ground cover that can cushion a fall, as opposed to equipment that stands on dirt, concrete, asphalt or artificial grass.

You can learn more about playgrounds online at kaboom.org. The KaBOOM! site even features a Playspace Finder, an online tool that lets users identify and rate parks across the country.