

PLAYGROUND PLANNING GUIDE

A comprehensive guide to playground design.

Includes detailed information and recommendations for all stages of the process, from initial concepts through installation and ongoing maintenance.

Compliments of



Introduction

At first, embarking on a playground project may seem overwhelming. There are hundreds of decisions to be made, from equipment to surfacing options to shade and beyond. Especially if it's your first time going through the process it can be difficult to even know where to start.

But don't worry. This guide will help you through each stage of the process, from the initial research to budgeting, design, installation and maintenance.

Partnering with a trusted, reputable playground company will enable you to bring your vision to life on time and on budget.

Don't hesitate to ask questions or seek additional information at any stage of your project. After all, your playground is important to so many children, families or residents. Playgrounds not encourage physical fitness, but they provide a gathering place and create a sense of community pride.

Sincerely,
Randy May
Owner, May Recreation Equipment & Design

"Play is the highest form of research." – Albert Einstein

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Gather Information

When building a playground, it's important to begin by researching and gathering information on different types of playgrounds. You can start to narrow down your likes and dislikes to create your "wish list."

Ideas to Gather Information:

Online – Look for pictures of playgrounds you love, read reviews or download case studies of similar projects.

Site Visits – It takes a bit more time, but visiting playgrounds in person gives you a feel for the material, layout, space, colors, etc.

Referrals – Contact others who recently went through the process. Get their thoughts and input, ask what the love or if there is anything they would have done differently.

Ask for Input – Gather input from community members, parents or key stakeholders. Solicit feedback and ideas of what they hope to see.

Browse Equipment Catalogs - Most vendors offer free catalogs. For example, through May Recreation you can request complimentary catalogs from any or all of the vendors listed on the next page.



Gather Info, cont...

Browse catalogs from any of the following vendors:

- ❑ Miracle (play equipment/shade structures/site furnishings)
- ❑ First Team (goals for all sports)
- ❑ No Fault (pour-in-place rubber surfacing)
- ❑ Raindrop Products (aquatic splash pads)
- ❑ Petersen Manufacturing (precast concrete site furnishings)
- ❑ Freenotes Harmony Park (musical instruments for outdoor settings)
- ❑ Fibar (wood fiber playground surfacing)
- ❑ Synlawn (synthetic turf playground surfacing)
- ❑ Stern-Williams (drinking fountains)
- ❑ Douglas Sports (sports equipment)
- ❑ Rubberecycle (rubberized loose fill surfacing)
- ❑ Madrax (bicycle racks)
- ❑ Hauser (architectural based site furniture)

To request any of the above catalogs, visit

MayRecreation.com

Establish a Budget

As with any major project, establishing a budget is a critical step in the process. Not only do you need to consider the playground equipment itself, but must account for the installation and inclusion of other elements you desire such as:

- Benches
- Tables
- Pet equipment
- Litter receptacles
- Drinking fountains
- Fitness equipment
- Surfacing
- Surfacing containment



These elements can not only enhance the esthetics of the play environment, but can also add to the overall enjoyment of all those using the playground, including children, family and community residents.

Define Playground Objectives

Before you go any further, you'll want to take time to think about and define your overall objectives. What are your goals for the playground?

Consider your Target User

Are you building it for community residents? Students? Church members? What age range? Are there special needs or circumstances to consider?

Define Your Goals

They might include some of the following:

- Promote physical health
- Encourage outdoor play
- Create a community gathering place
- Build community pride
- Encourage inclusive play

By defining exactly what you hope to accomplish, you can narrow down your choices to be create a playground that meets your needs within your budget.

Partner with a Playground Design Expert

When building a playground, it's important to partner with an industry expert. There are so many factors and decisions involved, you'll want to work with someone who has **years of experience and expert knowledge** with different equipment.

A trusted expert can answer questions, provide information, make recommendations and help guide you through the process.

Consider things such as a company's reputation, years in business, relationship with their vendors and previous projects.

Look for testimonials or case studies, and don't be afraid to ask for references. You want to work with someone you are comfortable with and has your best interests at heart.



Surfacing Options

When you envision your new playground, you probably think of the design options, structures, colors, layout and flow of the space. You may not give much thought to what's on the ground.

However, although it may not be as *exciting* as the structures themselves, the **type of surface used is every bit as important** and should be carefully considered when designing a new playground. Playground surfacing typically falls into two categories: loose fill and unitary options.

Loose Fill Playground Surfacing Options

Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) - [Fibar](#) is the pioneer for this economical option. Fibar's Drainage, geotextile fabric and wear mats help keep the playground safe and looking good.

Rubberized Loose Fill (Rubber Mulch) – If you prefer to use a synthetic product, Playsafer rubber mulch by [Rubberecycle](#) is safe, clean and environmentally friendly.



Surfacing Options, cont...

Unitary Playground Surfacing

Pour-in-Place - Pour-In-Place surfacing options offer an alternative to loose fill that is unparalleled in durability. May Recreation uses products supplied and installed by [No Fault](#).

Synthetic Turf – For those that want the look and feel of natural grass but love the idea of less maintenance and upkeep, synthetic turf may be the right choice.

Additionally, when designing a new playground don't forget the surfacing containment. Plastic border timbers come in a variety of colors to complete the look.



Ensure ADAAG Compliance

As of March 15, 2012, new and renovated playground surfaces must pass ASTM Standards for impact protection (F 1292) and wheelchair access (F 1951). It's imperative to have barrier free access to public play areas in order to comply with the American with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines.

Your playground design expert can help ensure that you are within the guidelines, installing elements such as:

- **Plastic ramping system**
- **Ground level play activities** - ADAAG requires a specific number of accessible ground-level play components based on the number of elevated play components in your play area.



You want your playground to be accessible and enjoyable for children of all needs, and it's important to plan ahead to ensure it's built that way.

Secure Site Location

The site you choose for your play environment can have a huge impact on the usability and life of your play equipment. Your design expert will be able to answer questions and make recommendations based on the following considerations:

- Site drainage
- Vegetation issues
- Shade requirements
- Noise restrictions
- Security requirements
- Ease of access to play area

It's important to consider all aspects up front, because it would be costly and time consuming to relocate equipment once it's installed. You don't want to find out after the first rain that you have a major drainage problem.



Establish Installation Method

Installation of your project can be the single most critical stage of your planning. All of your diligent planning for the project of your dreams will have been done for nothing if the installation of the project is not done by professional, courteous and knowledgeable installers.



May Recreation works with several installation companies that meet our high standards of professionalism and ethics. Please ask your sales representative to discuss installation options available for your project.

Establish Maintenance Schedule

Once your playground is complete, it's time to enjoy the new space! However, it's critical to schedule regular maintenance inspections. Just as your car performs best with regular oil changes and tune-ups, consistent maintenance will extend the life your playground.

Pay close attention to your surfacing depth and the overall appearance and usability of your play equipment.

Your playground designer can recommend a customized maintenance schedule based on your specific equipment and playground.



About May Recreation Equipment & Design

May Recreation Equipment & Design is a top supplier of playground equipment, shelters, playground safety surfacing, splash pads, site amenities, and related products in Northeast, East and Southeast Texas including the Greater Houston Area.

With years of experience in public and private projects, May Recreation prides itself on bringing projects in on time, on budget, and beyond our clients' expectations. If you're in the process of designing a playground, May Recreation can work with you to bring your vision to life. Our services include:

- Project design assistance
- Financing options
- CAD design capabilities
- Installation of most products

Contact May Recreation Today



*"It is a happy talent to know
how to play."*

-Ralph Waldo Emerson