

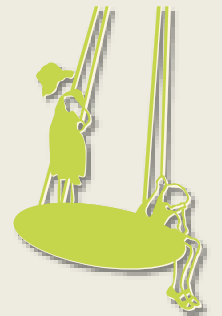
A few thoughts on playspace design

Rob Hamilton
Landscape Architect



promoting the value of play

Park and *Playspace*
www.parkandplayspace.com.au



Play can be

- **Physical**
 - opportunities for physical movement and challenge, strength and balance development
- **Cognitive**
 - a variety of textures and materials, spatial characteristics and surfaces
- **Creative**
 - Artistic, expressive, reactive and interactive allowing the child to manipulate and influence the world
- **Social**
 - social interaction, role-play, fantasy, cooperation, negotiation



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Key design elements

- **Active/equipment**
 - Physical play, strength and balance development, spacial awareness, motion
- **Open flexible space**
 - For running, ball games, mobile equipment, outdoor classroom
- **Creative/explorative/imaginative**
 - Such as sandpits; sticks, bark, leaves and planting; fallen branches; water; tools, tubes and blocks
- **Social/role-play/fantasy**
 - Such as tunnels and towers, cubby houses, seating perches, hidden alcoves, and play elements that require the efforts of more than one person
- **Educator/adult**
 - including interactive play, supervisor and amenity
- **Special features**
 - Art and historical elements, animals, linkages to the local community



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Supervision

The design should encourage active supervision by adults, particularly through the provision of accessible seating close to the play activities.

At least one seat *with back and arm rests* is essential for even the smallest playspace.



Budget considerations

Things every playground really should have

- Good accessibility and equal access
- Shade trees and/or shelter structures
- All-weather footpaths
- Fencing (in some cases)
- Drinking fountains
- Seats
- Drainage

...and, playground equipment?



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Diversity of play experiences and challenges

Playgrounds should offer varying degrees of challenge and usability, to enable children of varying ages and abilities to participate safely at their own level.

Variety should be both internal to a playspace and also from site to site.



Sustained interest

Equipment should offer ongoing appeal even after the physical elements have been mastered.



Group activities

Will offer more sustained interest than solo activities

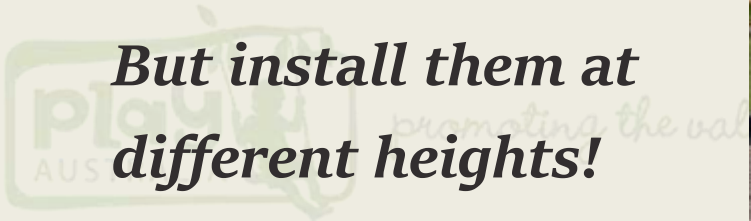




You can never have too many monkey bars



*But install them at
different heights!*



Provide opportunities for skills to develop over time

The same activity at different heights and/or levels of challenge will often be better than completely separate and random activities.

Give younger kids an opportunity to do the same activities as older kids at a size appropriate to their height and ability.



Difficulty

Difficulty and play value are not the same thing



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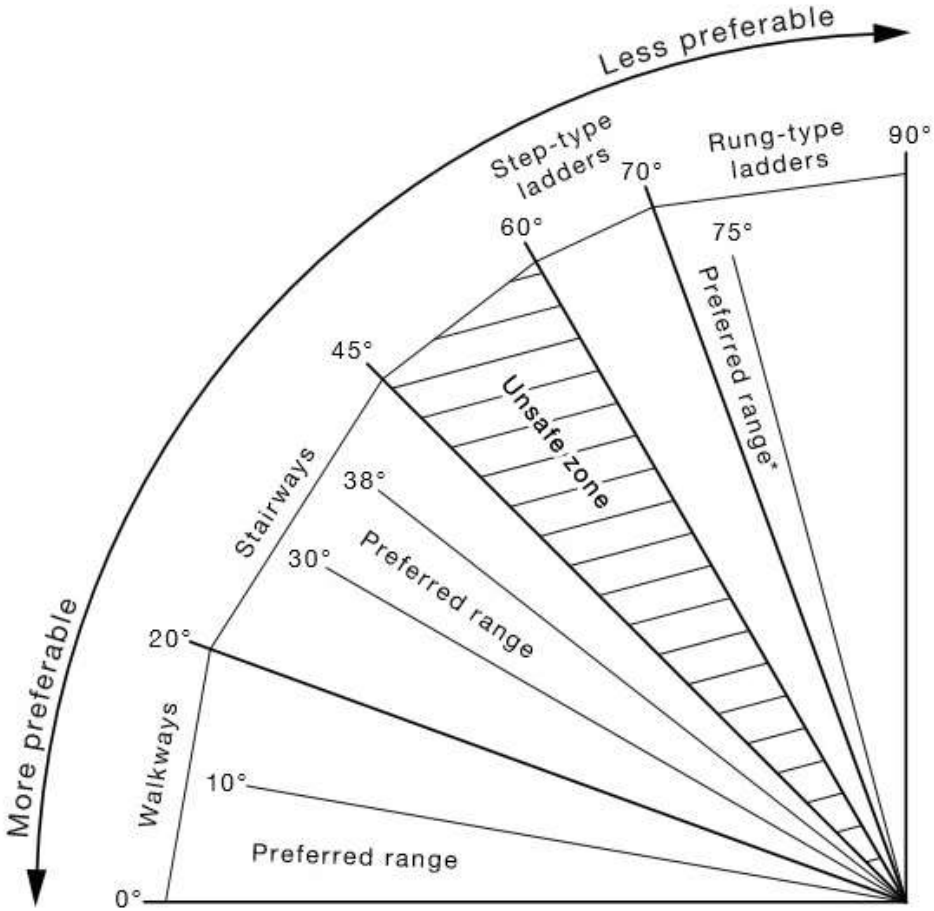


Adults buy playground equipment

but what looks good to an adult may not always be much fun



Biomechanics



*For twin-stile rung-type ladders

FIGURE 21A GUIDANCE FOR LIMITS TO SLOPE



Nature play

Offers experiences not possible from manufactured equipment.



Design for access and inclusion

In an ideal playspace *both* adults and children with a wide variety of temperaments and abilities can play together, participate in a choice of play activities, and use the amenities and facilities on the site.

Inclusive design addresses the needs of *all* users including carers with prams, the elderly, children with wheeled toys, and staff and maintenance workers.



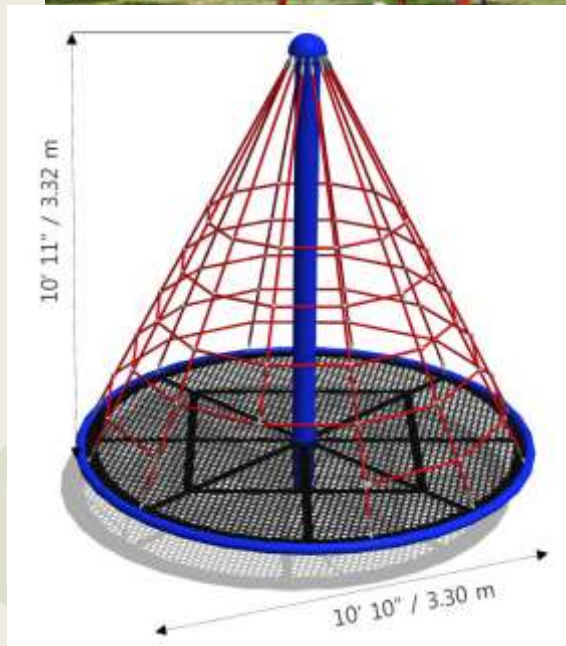
Basic accessible playground

ca. \$35,000 inclusive



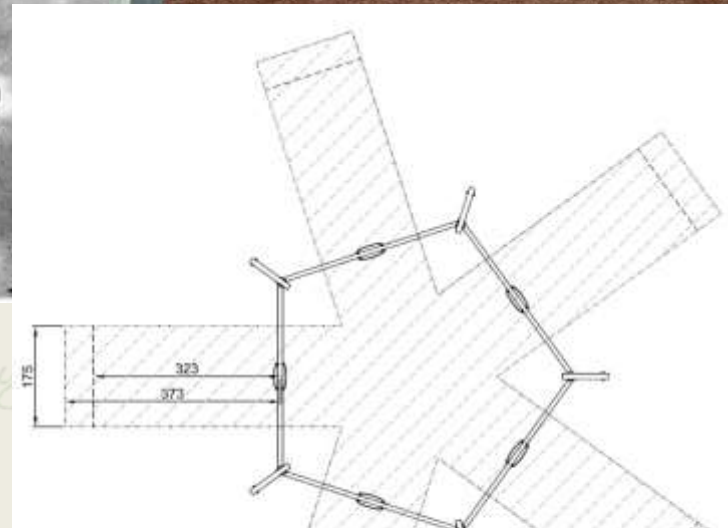
Basic accessible playground

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Zoning and Conflict

Avoid conflicts between active areas involving movement and areas for quieter, sedentary activities.



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Placement of moving equipment to minimize injury (AS4685.0)

“Equipment with components that swing or move vigorously, (such as swings, some overhead rocking/spinning equipment, rotating digging equipment, and cableways), offer important and beneficial play experiences to users but can pose a serious hazard to others (especially young children) crossing their path.

These items shall be located out of the main paths of travel within a playground. The items shall be located where they do not conflict with more sedentary activities or users. This is particularly important in confined spaces and in SECS.”



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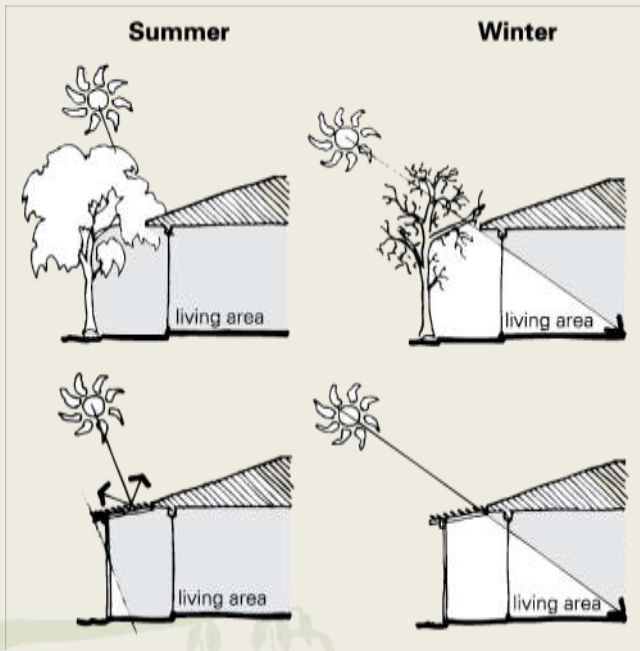


Face swings south/south-east



Shade and sun protection

From either trees or built elements, or both.



Kids like to sit too

Children need quiet spaces for creative and social play.



pro

Consider downstream costs

including:

- Regularity and complexity of maintenance required
- Demolition and renewal
- Drainage

and don't bury your rubbish



Maintenance access

Consider the ongoing need for maintenance access to the site and to equipment, surfacing, areas of lawn, vegetation and other features.





For all practical purposes, assume zero maintenance



Plant selection (from AS4685.0)

“Plants are valuable design elements in playgrounds and should be selected for their potential to provide for play as well for their visual amenity; sensory properties; potential for shade; and potential to withstand compaction, extremes of climate and the impact of users.”

“Avoid plants with sharp thorns, leaves or spikes; poisonous species, or those with foliage, flowers and seeds that cause choking hazards.”

“Avoid species notorious for limb dropping.”



Foreseeable vs unforeseeable risks



Post occupancy evaluation

Borrow someone else's kids if you have to...

- **What's popular and what isn't?**
- **Where are people sitting?**
- **Is shade where it needs to be?**
- **Emerging maintenance issues?**
- **Unanticipated traffic patterns?**
- **Unintended use?**
- **Plant survival?**





