

Play Panels





Play panels encourage children to engage in exploratory, dramatic, & practice play activities.
A variety of activities can be selected to promote independent, parallel, side-by-side and cooperative play.



| Features | Social/Emotional Development | Cognitive Development | Physical Development |
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| <p>Functionality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play panel activities offer a variety of fun, creative and interesting elements that children can explore and manipulate • Panels can offer various devices such as levers, dials, knobs, latches and wheels that can be manipulated in a variety of ways for tactile experiences and fine motor development • Panels offer a variety of sensory feedback through sounds such as clicking and ringing, they offer various textures to feel, and stimulating colors and movements to watch <p>Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of panel designs such as half/reach panels, full panels, and crows nest panels, are available for a variety of users <p>Location</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play panels can be positioned for accessibility at ground level, beside a structure, under a structure, or on a structure. Activities can also be strategically placed on enclosures to provide a variety of play experiences throughout the playground structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are likely to be successful with play panel activities helping reinforce positive self-image • Children can play side by side in a variety of social games with their friends • Play panel activities support conversations with other children • Activities allow children to practice new skills – independently • Play panels can be designed with side-by-side elements to facilitate parallel play, cooperative play, and group play • Panels can be configured with seating to offer cozy and gathering spaces for socialization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving as activities can be played in many ways • Play panel activities prompt curiosity and exploration as children learn about cause and effect • Themed panels like store fronts and castles encourage children to use their imagination and engage in pretend play as they explore a variety of roles such as pirates, pilots, or race car drivers • Panel activities allow children to explore and observe cause and effect • Play panel activities provide practice with tending to a task while building concentration • Play panels promote independent play as well as cooperative play – both being important elements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities offer fine motor activity for hand control, coordination and strength • Activities encourage play and allow children to practice crossing the mid-line • Children can use both hands together or separately when playing with panel activities supporting their motor planning and development • Activities may encourage balance as children maneuver at the activity • Activities may encourage children to reach across different planes |

| Sensory/Perceptual Motor Development | Universal Design Principles | Universal Design Benefits | Benefits for Children with Disabilities |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various activities may provide feedback to children through single or even multiple modalities • Auditory (sound) stimulation is offered as activities click or ring • Tactile (touch) stimulation is provided through a variety of textures and materials • Visual stimulation is offered through a variety of contrasting colors and movement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Fair Integrate a variety of play panels throughout the play environment instead of focusing them in only one area • Be Included Play panels should not be the sole accessible activity in the play environment • Be Smart Play panels need to accommodate a wide range of language and literacy skills and provide visual and tactile cues for participation in the play • Be Independent Play panels should incorporate tactile, auditory, and visual information/stimuli to provide variety and interest • Be Safe Panels should be arranged so that participation in the activities does not place the child in the primary circulation pathway • Be Active Play panels should include seating opportunities and be placed in shade and sun so that children have choices about their play • Be Comfortable Play panel activities should allow for manipulation using fine motor coordination and gross motor control | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating panels throughout the play environment promotes physical accessibility and social inclusion • Placing panels on unitary surface route(s) provides maximum access to the play elements • Panels can be positioned for easy reach for all children throughout the play environment • Half panels and panels with rounded backs allow children with adaptive equipment to comfortably approach the activity and engage in play • Panels provide tactile, auditory and visual cues for a variety of multisensory play experiences • Open ended play experiences can be provided with panels • Imaginative play and creativity can be enhanced with themed panels • Panels promote social/emotional, cognitive, physical and sensory/perceptual motor development • Panels can be used to promote learning and disability awareness with braille and sign language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Disabilities Play panels provide opportunities to develop motor coordination and control • Sensory Disabilities Play panels aid the development of environmental orientation and understanding through multi-sensory cues • Communicative Disabilities Play panels offer a variety of passive play experiences for socialization, communication and cooperation • Social/Emotional Disabilities Panels offer children opportunities to play successfully with their peers or to practice the activity independently • Cognitive Disabilities Play panels provide opportunities to strengthen imaginative processing and comprehension of behavioral requirements |



Sliding

| Features | Social/Emotional Development | Cognitive Development | Physical Development |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids love to slide! • A variety of sliding experiences can be created with straight, wide, tunnel, curved, spiral, and wavy slide bedways • The Velocity Slide offers a faster ride and a longer run out for easy dismount. These slides are a great option for older children who have mastered slides at lower heights • Slides offer a unique hood that encourages a proper seated entry • Side by side slides offer unique opportunities for cooperation or competition while moving • Plastic slides are available in a variety of colors and configurations. Stainless steel slides are also available for a unique look | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sliding supports autonomous play and parallel play • Sliding is an early independent play activity that many children can be successful at • Sliding promotes a positive self-image due to successful, independent play • Children can observe the sliding play of others to add to their own skill • Sliding provides opportunities for risk and challenge through speed, a sense of power, and a sensation of falling or flying • Sliding is a high interest activity giving children opportunities to socialize, negotiate and take turns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children use slides to understand and experience the pleasure of movement • Movement of objects on slides provide information about cause and effect • Children learn about friction and speed from sliding • Children practice problem solving when planning their various methods of descent and making preparations to land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sliding improves children's gross motor coordination, and it supports upper torso (arms, back, abdominals) muscular strength and endurance • Children learn to adjust their bodies to control speed & to make landing preparations • Sliding supports motor planning for transition posture (standing to sitting or lying down) at the slide entrance • Children can vary their level of challenge by selecting their method of descent – on stomach feet first, on back feet first, on bottom feet apart, etc. • Sliding encourages dynamic balance or stability while moving • Physical activity & fitness is promoted as children repeatedly climb & slide in circuits |
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| Sensory/Perceptual Motor Development | Universal Design Principles | Universal Design Benefits | Benefits for Children with Disabilities |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sliding provides vestibular stimulation by providing experience about the center of gravity, speed and balance • Many types of sensory inputs are gathered during sliding through a diversity of body positions on slides • Sliding provides kinesthetic awareness by increasing spatial awareness of body positioning and direction during movement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Fair Provide access to a variety of sliding experiences throughout the play environment • Be Included Slides can be strategically paired with equivalent dramatic and interactive activities for inclusion in physical & social play • Be Smart Design slide bedways with adjacent accessible routes of return so the environment is consistent with child expectations, intuition, and looping play behaviors • Be Independent Provide an adjacent and accessible route of return so children can more independently repeat the sliding experience • Be Safe Provide stepped transfers at slide entrances for children using mobility devices and ensure adequate space, outside of the circulation route, at the exit of the slide for parking adaptive equipment and caregiver clearance • Be Active Offer large platforms at slide entrances to provide adequate space to accommodate onlooking and passive resting • Be Comfortable Include wide bedways and double slides that offer space and support for personal assistance with sliding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide variety of sliding experiences can be provided throughout the play environment from the accessible route of travel • Slide bedways provide body support for a unique sensation of movement • A variety of return routes (accessible stairs, ramps, etc.) for repeating the sliding activity can be strategically placed for minimizing fatigue • Sliding is a high interest play activity so children with disabilities can be included in physical and social play while sliding • Extra long runouts support children's dismount from the slide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Disabilities Sliding provides opportunity for increased vestibular stimulation, motor coordination & control, balance, and stamina development • Sensory Disabilities Repetitive circuits of climbing and sliding provides multisensory stimuli that many children desire • Communicative Disabilities Sliding is a high interest activity that requires children to learn to communicate, negotiate, and take turns • Social/Emotional Disabilities Children can develop, master, and repeat sliding activities for a sense of achievement, pride, and fun • Cognitive Disabilities Sliding offers opportunities for problem solving and cause and effect while developing independent balance and motor coordination |
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Swings

| Features | Social/Emotional Development | Cognitive Development | Physical Development |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swinging provides a dizziness play experience Swinging can be an interactive activity, particularly with side-by-side and multichild swings like tire swings A variety of swings are available that offer various levels of physical support and social interaction Some swings move to and fro while others, like tire swings, offer spinning & swinging Tire Swings offer horizontal and vertical motion with peers Adaptive Seats offer tailored back, arm and neck support Belt Seats offer traditional experiences HandiSwing promotes upper body strength for independent swinging Enclosed Tot Seats offer lower body support for young users | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swinging fosters cooperation, sharing, and turn-taking because of their popularity and the limited number of users they can accommodate at a given time Fosters cooperation, negotiation, sharing & turn taking because of their popularity and the limited number of users they can accommodate at a given time Swinging promotes social interaction as children swing side-by-side or push a friend Swinging elicits positive feelings associated with motion Swinging provides unique stimulation that can relax or calm the user Swinging Provides a sense of control as children manipulate their own rate of speed and height while using their imaginations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits dramatic imagination by allowing the child to imagine situations and events (like flying) that are enhanced through the movement of swinging Helps children create a mental representation of things that are not physically present Provides opportunities for problem solving through dramatic play and motor planning and timing Encourages problem solving as children manipulate their bodies & compensate for starts, stops, speed, and height | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports open skill development through activities that require a constant change in movement Provides opportunities to practice repetitive motion of swaying Promotes fitness & motor skills through actions like leg pumping, torso leaning, pushing, jumping & landing The pendulum action of acceleration and deceleration of swings contributes to the development of balance Promotes development of rhythm Offers fine motor strength and coordination as children grasp swing chains Strengthens stamina through repetitive & continuous motion |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers sensations of movement, speed, height, and flying which especially affect sensory systems Provides a sense of movement and the force of gravity Benefits a child's proprioceptive system by moving through space and completing subtle adjustments to posture Stimulates the vestibular system which helps children develop balance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Fair As one of the most popular activities, an accessible diversity of swings should be available • Be Included Consider swinging activities like tire swings, that promote physical and social inclusion and eye contact with peers • Be Smart Swings allow children to be successful as they exhibit clear behavior cues for participation & allow children to imagine in creative play • Be Independent Adaptive swing seats provide additional supports & allow a child to independently experience movement • Be Safe Provide accessible surfacing that extends under the swing so a child can approach and transfer onto the seat and move the assistive device out of the swing path • Be Active Provide a variety of swings that offer different levels of adaptive support to promote physical effort. & movement • Be Comfortable Include swings that provide variation in motor control and a comfortable environment for personal assistance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swings can be selected to suit a variety of user groups with a broad range of abilities Swings can be distributed around a play environment to support various age groups Swings can be installed at various heights for developmental appropriateness & allocation of space A variety of accessible playground surfacing materials can be selected to accommodate users mobility devices in swing areas Swings offer unique movement experiences for children of all abilities Swings offer unique social and physical inclusion opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Disabilities Swings support diverse usable opportunities across variations in motor coordination and control, strength, stamina, and balance. Swinging represents an opportunity to develop these skills • Sensory Disabilities Swinging is a safe, repetitive, rhythmic, and multi-sensory stimuli that many children desire • Communicative Disabilities Swings can be used as a jump in activity space. They also offer unique opportunities for conflict resolution and negotiation skills as children advocate for their turn • Social/Emotional Disabilities Swinging represents a naturally mediated opportunity for peer interaction and communication while eliciting positive feelings from movement • Cognitive Disabilities Swinging provides unique imaginative play opportunities as children become pilots and fly up to the clouds |
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Crawl Tunnels

| Features | Social/Emotional Development | Cognitive Development | Physical Development |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunnels offer unique cozy spaces for a sense of enclosure and belonging • Tunnels can be used for physical play & passive resting play experiences • Tunnels are often used as cozy spaces during social, dramatic, and exploratory play • Tunnels can be used as a destination or linking element • Various tunnel configurations & elevations are available (Underground, Inchworm, Plummet Summit, Caterpillar, etc.) for a variety of motor and discovery experiences • Tunnels are available in a variety of color combinations, deck heights and space saving configurations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climbing through tunnels encourages visual, verbal, and tactile games through the openings in the windows and through each end of the tunnel (like peek-a-boo) • Tunnels offer unique destinations & cozy spots for autonomous and/or parallel play for pre-school children • Tunnels provide school-age children special gathering places for socializing, talking and hanging out with groups • Tunnels provide semiprivate destination places for reflecting and a sense of emotional security | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens understanding of object permanence • Supports exploration of spatial concepts such as over, under, in, out, beside, between, and through • Provides enclosed, cozy spaces for children to use their imagination and engage in creative play • Encourages problem solving as children plan destinations, routes, and means of travel through the tunnel • Provides unique spaces for imaginative play, creating games with rules, and following rules • Offers a fun place to observe play and learn from others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes developmental benefits of crawling • Encourages practice with balance and movement through space • Challenges strength and coordination • Provides practice with motor planning • Challenges children to change positions and posture from crawling to sitting |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides environmental experiences with light from the sun & shade • Offers shade and shadows from window openings and from ends of tunnel • Gives variations in touch and ambient temperature changes • Offers practice with spatial orientation and depth perception as children approach, enter, navigate and exit tunnels • Quiet and semi-private spaces give children an escape from overstimulation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Fair Crawl tubes can be used as ground level events, destination places, or as a linking element to access additional play opportunities • Be Included Provide crawl tubes for a variety of developmentally appropriate physical and social activities • Be Smart Use crawl tubes as an observation and jump-in point for children • Be Independent Tunnels form a clearly defined passageway and may be used as a cozy space for independent play and reduction of sensory overstimulation • Be Safe Crawl tubes have a high tolerance for error & they provide an emotional sense of security • Be Active Crawl tubes provide opportunities for physical activity, passive resting, and socializing with friends • Be Comfortable Crawl tubes accommodate variations in motor skill and provide comfortable shaded spots | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openings in tunnel offer supervision and play benefits • Tunnels are a useful physical and social activity for all levels of players • Tunnels are a low risk activity so children can freely explore and develop their own levels of challenge • Tunnels are a good activity for achieving independent success • Tunnels can be used as destination places or to link play elements • Tunnels can be designed with different configurations and features for a variety of experiences • Tunnels can have ground level or elevated points of entrance and they can be used with transfer decks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Disabilities Crawl tubes are usable across variations in motor coordination and control, strength, stamina, and balance • Sensory Disabilities Tunnels provide excellent multi-sensory cues for orientation, comprehension, motor coordination, balance, and relief from sensory overstimulation. They also provide cozy spaces for sun sensitivity and temperature regulation • Communicative Disabilities Crawl tubes provide opportunity for onlooking behavior (jump-in points) and independent decision making • Social/Emotional Disabilities Tunnels provide relief from sensory overstimulation and cozy spaces for socializing with friends or playing independently • Cognitive Disabilities Crawl tubes are usable across variations in sensory impairments, muscle tone, balance, strength & stamina, body size, and its use can be readily comprehended |
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Sand & Water Play

| Features | Social/Emotional Development | Cognitive Development | Physical Development |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand and water play environments can be created at ground level, with play counters, or with a variety of sand and water tables • Water play can be offered with a source • Storage and loose parts such as buckets, rakes, shovels, and rakes are important considerations for extending children's play • Sand and water play supports exploratory, dramatic, social, and interactive play activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand and water play allows children to experience independence and individualization as they explore, create, and discover • Sand and water play fosters social development as children engage in group play and share play materials • Children learn effective communication skills and cooperation in order to solve problems or accomplish goals when playing with sand and water • Sand and water play frames scenarios where negotiation becomes common during play • The abstract nature of sand serves as a canvas as children explore imaginative themes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand and water play promotes the development of creativity via choice and decisions while experimenting with tools and materials • Problem solving skills are mastered through the repetition provided by the loose play materials • Use of natural materials allows children to handle objects that can be grouped & categorized for understanding weight and volume • Play promotes the development of concepts such as empty and full, shallow and deep, and light and heavy • Sand and water play promotes practice with rational/counting, and measure/sets • Sand & water play develops scientific concepts of prediction, classification and experimentation • Exploration clarifies physical properties of materials like weight, texture, fluidity, wet/dry attributes, form/shape, and consistency • Children's resourcefulness will be challenged as they bring additional natural materials into their imaginative play | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand and water play allows children to master balance on a unique uneven surface • Strength and coordination are promoted as greater physical effort is required to move oneself and/or materials throughout the sand play area • Fine motor strength and coordination skills are practiced and further developed during manipulation of a variety of loose parts |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand play provides kinesthetic experiences that blend mind, body, and senses • Sand and water play allows experimentation with materials and solid objects allowing children to control material • Natural materials like sand and water offer a variety of multisensory stimulation with textures and temperatures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Fair Provide sand and water play experiences that can be accessed from the accessible route of travel • Be Included Create sand and water play areas that promote group socialization and cooperation • Be Smart Consider sand activities, like an accessible digger, and loose parts that support problem solving and promote understanding of cause and effect • Be Independent Maintain multi-sensory definition of edges and integral pathways in sand and water play areas • Be Safe Include shade and benches to accommodate for comfortable adult supervision near sand and water play as children can remain engaged for long periods of time • Be Active Consider storage needs so a variety of loose parts can be offered which allow children to creatively play more independently • Be Comfortable For elevated sand and water tables, plan for comfortable access and appropriate reach heights. Consider options for incorporating shade | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand play can be readily adapted to be inclusive for people of all ages and abilities • Sand and water tables can be installed at a variety of heights to further promote access with a variety of mobility devices • Accessible pathways and surfaces around the sand and water play area promote universal accessibility • Children are likely to engage in prolonged play episodes with sand and water giving additional opportunities for creative play, imaginative play, constructive play, and discovery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Disabilities Sand and water play represent opportunities to develop fine motor coordination and gross motor control • Sensory Disabilities The multi-sensory qualities of sand and water are ideal for children with sensory disabilities • Communicative Disabilities Sand and water play supports 'observational' types of play as well as peer interaction and communication • Social/Emotional Disabilities Sand and water areas can provide a sense of security and children can be successful at any level of exploration • Cognitive Disabilities Sand and water play supports appropriate play along the continuum of development with opportunities to develop problem solving skills |
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