

HEAD START BODY START  
NATIONAL CENTER FOR PHYSICAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND  
OUTDOOR PLAY



**Natural Playgrounds:**  
The Ins & Outs from Design to Safety

Presented by JC Boushh  
Play Consultant



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## Session Handouts



<http://bit.ly/goQbij>

(HSBS website – Online Learning Page)

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## Meet the Speaker



JC Boushh, Play Consultant  
HSBS Physical Activity  
Consultant  
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## Defining a Natural Playground

"Natural playgrounds" are play environments that blend natural materials, features, and indigenous vegetation with creative landforms to create purposely complex interplays of natural, environmental objects in ways that challenge and fascinate children and teach them about the wonders and intricacies of the natural world while they play within it.



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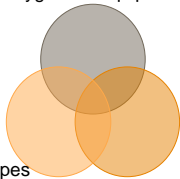
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### Elements of Outdoor Design



Developmentally Appropriate Playground Equipment



Loose Parts

Living Landscapes



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### What is nature play and why is it important?

- Nature play encourages children to learn about the wonders and secrets of the natural world.
- Elements of play promoted by nature:
  - Climbing
  - Rolling
  - Inventing with loose parts
  - Putting on performances
  - Socializing in quiet areas
  - Maneuvering around interesting pathways
  - Interaction with water, sand and earth
  - Hiding
  - Sensory exploration




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### Important Design Elements

- Entrance
- Natural boundaries
- Reflect local culture
- Music
- Loose Parts
- Sand and Water
- Pathways between distinct areas
- Sensory and Edible Gardens
- Quiet Areas
- Attract Wildlife
- Use of natural topography




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### Playground Safety Guidelines for Public Playgrounds

- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
- American Standards for Testing & Materials
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Local Building Codes




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## Applying Playground Guidelines to Natural Play Elements

### CPSC 1.3 What is a Public Playground?

"Public" playground equipment refers to equipment for use by children ages 6 months through 12 years in the playground areas of:

- Commercial (non-residential) child care facilities
- Multiple family dwellings, such as apartment and condominium buildings
- Parks, such as city, state, and community maintained parks



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## Log Stumps



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## Log Stumps

### 8.15 Stepping Forms:

- Max height = 20 inches (4 and under)
- Max height = 30 inches (5-12)
- Max play surface slope = 30 inches



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## Logs



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## Logs

### 5.3.1 Balance beams

- Balance beams should be no higher than:
  - Toddlers: not recommended.
  - Preschool-age: 12 inches.
  - School-age: 16 inches.



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## Embankment Slides



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## Embankment Slides

### 5.3.6.3.1 Embankment slides

- The slide chute of an embankment slide should have a maximum height of 12 inches above the underlying ground surface. This design basically eliminates the hazard of falls from elevated heights.
- Embankment slides should follow all of the recommendations given for straight slides where applicable (e.g., side height, slope, use zone at exit, etc.).
- There should be some means provided at the slide chute entrance to minimize the use of embankment slides by children on skates, skateboards, or bicycles.

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## Climbing Trees



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## Boulders



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## Boulders

What are the intended uses?



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## Climbing Walls



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### Climbing Walls (Climber Guidelines)

Maximum height of a designated play surface for 2-5 year old is 60"

Maximum height of a designated play surface for 5-12 year old is 84"

Unless otherwise specified in this section, the fall height for climbers is the distance between the highest part of the climbing component and the protective surfacing beneath it.

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## Stages & Decks



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## Ground Level Play Components



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## Ground Level Play Components

Equipment that requires the child to be standing or sitting at ground level and to maintain constant contact with the ground during play has no individual use zone but must have sufficient space between it and adjacent equipment for play and circulation.

The use zone of two or more stationary play structures that are play functionally linked are determined as if the separate equipment are part of a composite structure.

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## ADA Guidelines



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## ADA Guidelines

### What is a Ground Level Play Component?

Ground-level play components are items that can be approached and exited at ground level. For example, a child approaches a spring rider at ground level via the accessible route. The child may ride the component and then exit directly back onto the accessible route. The activity is considered ground level because the child approaches and exits it from the ground-level route.

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## Berms



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# Swings




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# Swings

Multiple occupancy swings with the exception of tire swings (CPSC #325-08 Section 2.3.1)



Ropes Swings (CPSC #325-08 Section 2.3.1)

Ropes are not used to suspend swings. Fiber ropes are not recommended as a means of suspending swings since they may degrade over time.

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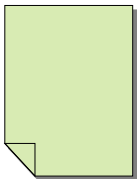
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# General Requirements



Please refer to the Fact Sheet




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## What's Next?

- I Have Designed the Playscape...



- I Have Built the Playscape...




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## Before the Playground is Open . . .

- Perform Inspections
  - Safety Audit
  - Jobsite Inspection
- Teach Owner Their Responsibilities
  - Maintenance
  - Safety




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## Owner Responsibilities

### Safety

- Understand CPSC
- Risk Management
- Teach children their role
- Playground signage
  - Age appropriate
  - Supervision required




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