

# NATURE PLAY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

## 1. Essence of Play

- Play is initiated and controlled by children.
- Play is a process with no prescribed outcome involving; exploration, investigation and manipulation.
- Play is driven solely by "intrinsic motivation".
- Play is necessary for development and is pleasurable to each child.

*Source: International Play Association, Declaration on the Importance of Play, 2014.*

## 2. Nature Play and Learning Place:

A designated, managed area in an existing or modified outdoor environment where children of all ages and abilities play and learn by engaging with and manipulating diverse natural elements, materials, organisms, and habitats, through sensory, fine motor and gross motor experiences.

*Source: Moore, Robin, Nature Play & Learning Places, 2014.*

## 3. Nature Continuum:

A theoretical approach that looks at the environment in terms of a continuum that stretches from a completely human-made construct, devoid of living elements at one end, to the untouched natural environment at the other end; and recognizes that most functioning human environments fall somewhere in between the two extreme, and are composed of a mixture of both natural and synthetic/manufactured elements.

*Source: Adapted by Jeff Kaster from "The Stewardship Model" of Bob Scarfo, (former professor of Landscape Architecture at University of Guelph).*

## 4. Play Value:

Play value is a measure of the developmental significance of a play setting, object or material as a stimulus for children's play.

*Source: Moore, Goltsman, Iacono, Play for All Guidelines, 1992.*

## 5. Hazard:

Source of harm.

*Source: International Standards Organization, guide 51, 2013.*

A hazard is something that a child does not see.

*Source: Moore, Goltsman, Iacono, Play for All Guidelines, 1992..*

Hazard refers to any potential source of harm and is often used to describe a situation that is unacceptable and requires mitigation.

*Source: Moore, Robin, Nature Play & Learning Places, 2014.*

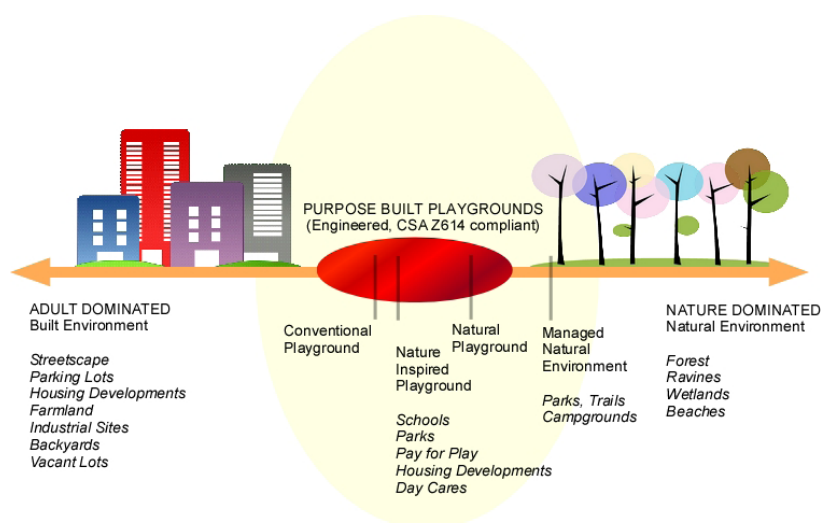
A hazard is a danger that a child can not perceive and should not need to assess such as the structural integrity of a play element, bolts on equipment that could be protrusions, or entanglement potential in elements. In playgrounds, hazards are identified and managed by CPSIs, park managers, play equipment designers and other professionals.

Source: *BTB*.

6. Risk:

Risk is defined as the combination of the probability of occurrence of harm and the severity of that harm. Risk is present in virtually every situation both in nature and in life, and part of growing up is learning how to navigate risk.

Source: *Moore, Robin, Nature Play & Learning Places, 2014.*



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Children and teenagers take self-chosen risks as a natural and necessary part of their play and learning. Risk taking is both inevitable and necessary for development and learning. The process of building up experience necessarily entails risk but also can be a source of fun. As people we all need to make judgments of what constitutes an acceptable level of risk.

Source: *Bernard Spiegel, Presentation at Presidio on Beneficial Risk, April 28, 2013.*

7. Challenge:

A challenge is something a child can see and chooses to undertake or not. (Note - Children need to take risk to challenge their skills and courage. A risk free play area is neither possible nor desirable.)

Source: *Moore, Goltsman, Iacaofano, Play for All Guidelines, 1992.*

8. Graduated level of challenges:

Settings that provide activities with a broad range of challenges and graduated levels of safe risk-taking to children of different ages and abilities.

Source: *Moore, Goltsman, Iacaofano, Play for All Guidelines, 1992.*

9. Playground Risk Management:

Purpose is to reduce loss of life and debilitating injury, to limit exposure to liability and control losses, to maintain playground environment and to show good intent.

*Source: National Recreation and Parks Association, Certification Course for Playground Safety Inspectors Manual, 2012.*

Managing risks in public spaces is a value-based activity. Risk-benefit analysis means that the provider weights, with equal consideration, the duty to protect children from avoidable serious harm and the duty to provide them with stimulating adventurous play opportunities.

*Source: Ball, Gill Spiegel, Managing Risk in Play Provision, 2008.*

Elements of a comprehensive risk management plan include: playground safety policy, leadership (safety coordinator) documentation, safety audit (sets baseline), inspections and maintenance.

*Source: National Recreation and Parks Association, Certification Course for Playground Safety Inspectors Manual, 2012.*

Risk management protocol should include: determining the applicable design standards and standards of care in the site jurisdiction; engaging with the site insurer and/or risk manager; conducting a risk assessment and eliminating hazards presenting undue risk or harm; conducting a risk assessment of natural features within a designated nature play space; developing an inspection routine; documenting and evaluating all incidents; maintaining records of inspections and incident reports coupled with regular staff evaluations and recorded responses; and communicating with the users of the space.

*Source: Moore, Robin, Nature Play & Learning Places, 2014.*

10. As safe as necessary versus as safe as possible:

Children have a natural propensity towards risky play; and keeping children safe involves letting them take and manage risks. Safety efforts should be balanced with opportunities for child development through outdoor risky play. Make play as safe as necessary rather than as safe as possible to balance priorities for optimal child development.

*Source: Mariana Brussoni, Risky Play and Children's Safety; Balancing Priorities for Optimal Child Development, 2012.*

11. Affordance:

An affordance can be described as a quality of an object, or an environment, which allows an individual to perform an action. The concept helps us understand how children "read," interact with, and learn the functional property of the environment to serve their needs.

*Source: Moore, Robin, Nature Play & Learning Places, 2014.*

12. Open-endedness:

One way to provide flexibility is with elements that users can manipulate and build onto for their own reasons.

*Source: Moore, Goltsman, Iacono, Play for All Guidelines, 1992.*

An open-ended play element or environment allows children and teens to express themselves freely and creatively in play. They are not bound by a predetermined or a preset limitation.

*Source: BTB.*

13. Use zone:

The surface under and around a piece of equipment unto which a child falling from or exiting from the equipment would be expected to land. These zones are also designated for unrestricted circulation around the equipment.

*Source: CPSC, Public Playground Safety Handbook, 2010.*

A use zone is a designated clear space under and around a piece of play equipment. The purpose of a use zone is to minimize injuries from falls from the play equipment where the users feet will leave the ground while engaging with the equipment. Use zone clearances, dimensions and surfacing properties are detailed in the CPSC Handbook and ASTM F1487, F2223 and F2373. Use zones are not clearly identified in the National Guidelines Nature Play & Learning Places; however, the guidelines address potential falls in Chapter 6 and suggest considering using an attenuated play surface for objects that are 24 inches or greater in height and do not have moving parts.

*Source: BTB.*