

How do playgrounds influence development of children's fundamental movement skills?

December 2023



Introduction



Fundamental movement skills are on the decline, but playgrounds can play a vital role in reversing this trend. This brief provides a summary of a scoping review authored by Charlotte Pawlowski and colleagues in 2023. The review encompasses findings from 14 research studies.

The brief outlines a set of design principles that can guide the creation of playgrounds aimed at fostering the development of fundamental movement skills in children.

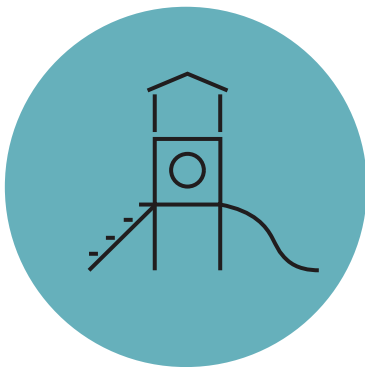
This brief is particularly relevant for professionals involved in the development of playgrounds within early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings, including architects, planners, and those working with children in this context.

Key messages

You should utilize these design principles to:



Design playgrounds with a diverse range of features that target climbing, balance, throwing, and catching. These features offer numerous opportunities for children to enhance their fundamental movement skills, encompassing locomotor and object control skills, as well as stability.



Craft sensory-rich playgrounds featuring appealing colors and multi-textured materials, as these have proven valuable for the development of children with disabilities.



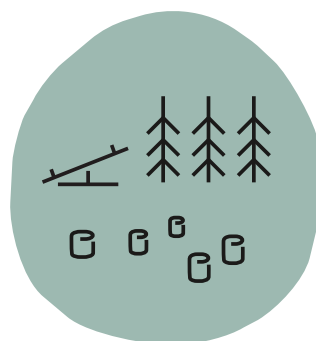
Ensure that playground features are intuitive and adaptable to different developmental stages.

Does playground size matter?

The review conducted by Pawlowski and colleagues concludes that greater space tends to facilitate more opportunities for the acquisition of fundamental movement skills, particularly among young children.

Spreading features over a larger area can enhance children's walking and running skills by requiring them to move between different elements. Furthermore, ample space encourages children to engage in active games without relying on equipment.

Which effect do nature playgrounds have?



Additionally, this review suggests that a natural play environment can contribute to the development of fundamental movement skills in children.

However, due to limited evidence, the positive effects attributed to nature playgrounds might be influenced more by the expansive size of these settings than by nature itself.

Key take home message

Creating evidence-based design guidelines will necessitate more robust, high-quality research.

This brief is based on

'The role of playgrounds in the development of children's fundamental movement skills: A scoping review' written by Pawlowski, C. S., Madsen, C. D., Toftager, M., Amholt, T. T. & Schipperijn, J. (2023).

Sharing research

At the World Playground Research Institute we are dedicated to sharing valuable insights from research studies and reviews through concise and accessible publications called Briefs.

Briefs provide summaries of key research findings and their implications, serving as valuable resource for policy and decision-makers.

All briefs focus on topics related to the development and design of playground as well as the impact of playgrounds on children's physical activity, mental and social health and motor skills.

To access our briefs, simply visit our website at www.playgroundresearch.org.