

Promoting positive play - how to ensure the playground is used safely, co-operatively and fairly – tips for play supervisors

Supervising play is a complicated balancing act and whilst children's safety must be the primary concern of any organisation facilitating play, over-supervision can have very damaging effects on children's development and vastly reduce the appeal of the play activities.

The playground offers a wonderful opportunity for developing self-regulation and supervisors need to make sure they're not stepping in too early to resolve disputes or conflict, but giving the children involved the chance to resolve the issue themselves, or other children the opportunity to help maintain fairness and co-operation within the playground.

Children thrive when they're given responsibility and trust, so keep rules to a minimum to start with. Try getting a group of children, e.g. the school council, to agree rules so that the children feel engaged in the process – they're much more likely to self-regulate and accept the consequences of breaking the rules.

Try to enable free flow of play but ensure that younger or shy children aren't being intimidated and prevented from using the play equipment if they want to. However, don't make the mistake of assuming that every child wants to play on the equipment. Facilitating choice and free play is a key function of play supervisors.

A buddy system can work well to encourage younger children to play on the equipment and help older children develop leadership skills and consideration.

Fewer, consistently enforced rules are more effective than many rules. If your playground has lots of rules, review them and see if they are all necessary and beneficial – make sure there aren't rules for just for the sake of it. Display the rules near the play equipment and ensure all the children know and understand them.



Adventure Play Equipment

The Pyramid by Setter Play provides some big climbing challenges and yet is skeletal in its design to provide clear sight lines for subtle supervision whilst the children encourage each other to conquer the Pyramid