



Risk Management *Tips*

Playing it Safe with Age-appropriate Playground Equipment

A number of playground-related accidents occur because children are allowed to use inappropriate equipment for their age. Because preschool children may not have developed upper body strength and agility, they should be directed away from some playground equipment. An effective playground supervision policy should include recognizing equipment that may be inappropriate for young children.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission's Public Playground Safety Handbook offers the following guidelines for age-appropriate equipment. This is not an all-inclusive list, and you should consult the manufacturer's guidelines or use good judgment for equipment not listed below.

Guidelines for Age-appropriate Playground Equipment

Toddlers - under age 2

- Climbing equipment under 32 inches high
- Ramps
- Single file step ladders
- Slides¹
- Spiral slides less than 360°
- Spring rockers
- Stairways
- Swings with full bucket seats

Preschool – ages 2-5

- Certain climbers²
- Horizontal ladders less than or equal to 60 inches high for ages 4 - 5
- Merry-go-rounds
- Ramps
- Rung ladders
- Single file step ladders
- Slides³
- Spiral slides up to 360°
- Spring rockers
- Stairways
- Swings – belt, full bucket seats (2-4 year olds) & rotating tire



(Continued)

Grade school – ages 5-12

- Arch climbers
 - Chain or cable walks
 - Free standing climbing events with flexible parts
 - Fulcrum seesaws
 - Ladders – horizontal, rung & step
 - Overhead rings
 - Merry-go-rounds
 - Ramps
 - Ring treks
 - Slides³
 - Spiral slides with more than one 360° turn
 - Stairways
 - Swings – belt & rotating tires
 - Track rides
 - Vertical sliding poles
1. For toddlers, slide chutes should have an average incline of no more than 24 degrees, with no section of the chute having a slope greater than 30 degrees, and the chute exit region should be no more than 6 inches above the protective surfacing.
 2. Playgrounds designed for children under 4 years old should avoid arch climbers, flexible climbers, horizontal ladders, parallel bars, and other upper body equipment.
 3. For preschoolers, slide chutes should have an average incline of no more than 30 degrees, with no section of the chute having a slope greater than 50 degrees. The chute exit region should be at least 7 but not more than 14 inches above the protective surfacing, if the slide is over 4 feet high. If the slide is less than 4 feet, the exit chute should be no more than 11 inches above the protective surfacing.

Playground Equipment Product Recalls

Did you know that over the past five years, there have been nine product recalls relating to playground equipment? Be sure to check periodically for product recalls on the [US Consumer Product Safety Commission's \(CPSC\) web site](#) to ensure playground equipment is safe to use.

When you purchase new playground equipment, complete and mail the manufacturer's registration form immediately in order to receive recall notifications.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.