



Systemwide Safety Programs
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION
RECESS PROCEDURES FOR PLAYGROUND AIDES

This guide has been developed to assist elementary schools in establishing sound practices for the supervision of children during recess. Furthermore, there are guidelines and standards for safe and acceptable activities, established both indoor and outdoor, which will serve to make the recess play period a learning experience for children. Playground aides and teachers are expected to be thoroughly familiar with these rules.

A. Division of Playground

The playground might be divided into areas of activity with aides and teachers making certain every child knows the activity permitted in each area.

B. Acceptable Outdoor Activities

1. Rings, tetherball, volleyball, basketball, hopscotch, and jump rope are acceptable activities on the blacktop area. Haphazard running, chasing, and tag games on the blacktop are *not* permitted.
2. Grassed area is to be used for activities determined by the principal or designee to be safe and appropriate for each grade level. The physical education teacher may provide suggestions for activities to be used during recess.
3. Baseball and football games are not permitted at any time.
4. It is the responsibility of the teachers to instruct their students concerning standards for safety and behavior, as well as which activities are permitted on the playground and the designated areas for these activities, and to supply the necessary equipment.
5. It is the responsibility of the aide to see that common sense standards of safety and behavior are being observed, to correct youngsters in a proper manner when deviations from these standards occur, and to maintain all playground rules.
6. Children are not to play with neighborhood pets; to throw or kick dirt, stones, sticks, and debris on the playground or into neighbors' yards; to attract and/or disturb children and pets in neighboring yards; to bounce objects on school walls; to wrestle on the ground; to climb trees; to hit one another even playfully; and to tease other students.
7. Sharp objects which could cause injury, such as metal cans, broken glass, and stones, should be removed to trash cans by the teacher or aide on duty. If the quantity of such objects is large, he/she should notify a building service worker and keep students away from the area until it is safe for play. Do not ask a student to pick up the sharp object and put it in a trash container. Any item on or near the playground which would cause injury—such as a hole in the ground, bees' nest in a tree, and dead or broken branches—

must be reported to the principal's office. Such areas are off limits until they are made safe.

C. Acceptable Indoor Activities

1. When rain, snow, or bitter cold dictates that students should remain indoors during their recess play period, it will be the responsibility of teachers to instruct their classes as to which activities are permitted within the room and to make available for use those games, puzzles, and other equipment which can be used.
2. Consult the Emergency Resources for Indoor Activities pertaining for appropriate activities for art, music, and physical education located at: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/emergency/resources/>.
3. It is the responsibility of the playground aide to maintain order, to encourage proper standards of safety and behavior, to correct students in a constructive manner when there is a violation of rules, and to caution children if it appears that emotions and excitement are mounting to a point where incorrect actions may soon result.
4. Students who are chronic violators of rules and those who commit serious offenses should be sent to the office. It is the duty of an aide when checking out to verify that a student sent to the office did, indeed, report to the office.
5. Injuries and illness in the classroom should be treated the same as those which might occur on the playground.

D. Policy Concerning Children Who Stay Indoors During Outdoor Play Period

If for reasons of health, discipline, or completing assigned schoolwork a student remains in the classroom during the outdoor play period, the student is the responsibility of the teacher for that classroom.

E. Specification of "Off-limit" Areas

Teachers should provide students the opportunity to use restrooms and water fountains before they go to the playground. Some emergencies will arise and aides are requested to exercise good judgment. No student should enter the building during play period without the knowledge and consent of the person on duty.

1. Students are not to play near windows of classrooms.
2. Students are not to leave school property.

F. Rules for Safe Use of Permanent Equipment

1. Do not use when wet.
2. Students should form a single file line, awaiting turns to use all equipment.
3. Opposed thumb grip should be used on all climbing and swinging structures.
4. Students may not sit in rings but rather swing from one to the other until they have reached the end.
5. A student may not begin to swing on rings and bars until the student ahead of him/her has finished.
6. Students may not sit on top of equipment (such as monkey bars, jungle gyms, rock walls, etc.).

G. Responsibilities of Playground Aides and Use of Discipline

1. Since the primary responsibility of the aide is the supervision of all students on the playground, the aide shall not participate in or umpire any games or activities.
2. If playground rules are being broken, aides are expected to speak to the student in question in a constructive manner and tone. Example: "John/Jane, please do not run on the blacktop. You may run into someone or you may fall and skin your knee. Play tag on the grass area."
3. If students consistently violate the rules of the playground despite reminders (insubordination), refer them to the school administration office.
4. If the student's first offense is serious (example: breaking a window, fighting, using profane language), refer the student to the school administration office. The administration and/or teacher will determine discipline.
5. **Never** tell a student to sit in the classroom the remainder of the period.

H. Injuries, Illnesses, and First Aid

1. In case of injury to one's pride, be sympathetic and understanding.
2. In case of injury (e.g., splinter, cut, skinned limbs, bump on head), send the student to the office immediately in the company of a fellow student who is considered responsible. Each school should develop its own emergency procedures.
3. In case of serious injury, notify the office immediately by an expedient method at your disposal (interrupt a teacher's class if needed so the teacher can help). Beware of moving the child. Keep area clear of other students. The welfare of this child becomes your sole responsibility. (See first aid procedures.)
4. If a child becomes ill, he/she should be sent to the school administration office in the company of a responsible student.
5. First aid, whenever possible, should be administered in the health room by the office staff.
6. Should an aide ever leave the playground area while on duty? If in your judgment the safety, welfare, or survival of a student is dependent upon such action, do not hesitate.

I. Procedure for Termination of Play Period

1. When the bell rings, students should line up on designated area space.
2. When a line is orderly, you may dismiss students to enter the building.
3. Students are to go in the building quietly at all times in an orderly manner in single file.

J. Making Existing Playgrounds Safer

1. The playground aide should:
 - Have a thorough knowledge of all rules obtained from the school's physical education teacher.
 - Know what games may be played in each predetermined area.
 - Know the school's accident-reporting procedures.
 - Know the school's discipline policy.
 - Have a basic understanding of first aid procedures.
 - Be consistent in dealing with problems that arise. Deal with problems constructively.
 - Be constantly moving from area to area while keeping the total playground in view and do not get involved in games.
 - Be alert to potential problem situations such as the following:

- Organized team games that result in arguments on rule interpretation
 - Individual games, like 3 square and tetherball, which require taking turns
 - Discourage dangerous situations such as the following:
 - Tag on the blacktop or confined areas where large numbers of students may be located
 - Team games such as basketball taking place in the center of individual play areas
 - Students running through other games
 - Chase games on or near climbing equipment
 - Inadequate field conditions for the activity
 - A student trying a task that is too difficult for his/her age or size
 - Overcrowding of certain areas/equipment
 - Games with materials (balls, ropes, hoops, etc.) near climbing equipment
 - Check the playground for hazardous situations such as the following:
 - Poor condition of equipment
 - Poor condition of surface under equipment
2. Never send a student to the classroom for the remainder of the period.
 3. Never leave the playground area while on duty unless in his/her judgment the safety, welfare, or survival of a student is dependent upon such action.
 4. As follows, the physical education teacher should:
 - Provide suggestions for activities to be used during recess and how to best use field space.
 - Recommend appropriate equipment and supplies for the recess period.
 5. As follows, the principal should:
 - Assign an appropriate number of aides (defined as anyone assigned to playground duty) to playground duty as facilities and numbers dictate. Supervision should be continuous. One adult should be dismissing one group while the second adult should be supervising those just arriving.
 - Schedule the recess so similar grade levels stay together (i.e., pre-K–K, K–1, 2–3, 4–5, etc.).
 - Define boundaries for ease of supervision while maximizing play area.
 - Ensure that a discipline policy and consequences are established and that students and teachers are informed.
 - Establish and enforce the discipline procedure to be followed.
 - Require a periodic check of all equipment and field space by building service staff.
 - Require the grounds to be checked daily for broken glass and other dangerous debris (gravel on blacktop).