



PlayDays Canada

**An Initiative of
International Play Association (Canada)**

Event Hosting Guide



Promoting the Child's Right to Play



International Play Association (IPA World)

IPA World began in 1961 in Copenhagen, Denmark and now has members in nearly 50 countries. The aim and intent of IPA is outlined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which seeks to protect, preserve and promote play for all children worldwide. IPA established the addition of the word 'play' to Article 31 in 1980, supporting the global perspective that play is a fundamental part of life.

International Play Association Canada (IPA Canada)

IPA Canada has been active as a chapter of IPA World since 1983. It protects, preserves and promotes the Child's Right to Play and is guided by passionate play advocates to uphold Article 31. As an interdisciplinary organization, IPA brings together play animators, planners, psychologists, educators, academics and landscape designers. IPA Canada is supporting the importance of play in Canadian children's lives through initiatives focused on such areas as children's environments, play leadership practice and play provision for children experiencing impairment or disability.



Promoting the Child's Right to Play

www.ipacanada.org





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UN Convention on the Rights of

the Child, Article 31



- The UN convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Canada in 1991, requires governments to
- recognize the child's right to engage in age-appropriate play and recreational activities appropriate for their age; and
- encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreation and leisure activity.





Introduction

PlayDays Canada is about the hosting of a special event that provides unique and playful opportunities for children.

This type of child and family friendly event takes place in many communities, in all seasons, both indoors and out. You'll find Play Days both here and around the world – in the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, Thailand, South America, and Hong Kong. In Canada, Play Days occur in early childhood settings, during summer playground programs, in schools or as part of large community based celebrations such as Family Day, Canada Day or National Child Day.



This resource provides a guide for thinking about and providing a Canada Plays event that will support the emergence of play in children and all of the benefits that accrue from play. Toward that end, the guide outlines the following key topics:

- play and the importance of play in children's lives
- core concepts and components of a PlayDays Canada event
- considerations for planning a PlayDays Canada event
- eight Great Places for Play

Whether you are running a PlayDay for the first time or are improving your current PlayDay, we wish you all the best as you support the development of healthy, active *and* creative Canadian children.





The Importance of Play

Play is fundamental to human development. A basic ingredient of physical, social, mental and emotional growth, play fosters creativity and flexibility. Through play, children learn about their environment – the physical and social world in which they live.

From a very young age, children have a natural desire to play. In anthropological terms, this attraction is likely part of a built-in human survival mechanism. Children who play well are better able to cope.

So what *is* play?

A widely accepted definition of play includes these criteria:

- freely chosen
- personally directed
- intrinsically motivated

In other words, children initiate and control their play. The incentive comes from within, and there is no right or wrong way of doing things.

Play is able to meet children's evolving developmental needs because of its almost endless scope – and because children are making their own choices.

Think of all the things children accomplish as they play. Using their senses and body movements, they explore and learn about their environments. Using their imagination, they create their own special worlds and figure out how to organize things. Playing with others, they learn how to cooperate. Playing in multi-generational family groups and in the larger community, they gain a stronger sense of belonging. All those accomplishments and more develop children's identity and self-confidence.

In recent decades, children's play opportunities have been compromised by safety fears, increased traffic, cultural shifts and the sheer busyness of our fast-paced lives. PlayDays Canada aims to counter those threats to the range and quality of children's play. We envision nothing less than a play revival as the PlayDays Canada concept snowballs across our country.





Ingredients of a Successful PlayDays Canada Event

A truly successful PlayDay extends well beyond entertainment into that magical realm of play. Drop in on such a PlayDay, and you're sure to find these three key ingredients:

- a. unique play "spaces" that children can transform into special "places";
- b. unique and captivating things to do within each of these spaces; and
- c. great leaders or "animators" who support children in discovering the various facets of each play space.

Let's see how each of those ingredients might fit into your PlayDay.

A. Space to Place

Take a moment to imagine a time when, as a child, you discovered a unique space in the corner of a room, backyard, field or natural area. Remember how you gathered up things in the space and placed them in certain ways according to an imaginary world that began to emerge and become real before your eyes. As your imaginary world grew, remember further how the physical *space* merged with this world to become a *magical place* – a place that now held meaning for you. A place where you could return time and time again to rebuild and add new chapters to an expanding narrative.

Now imagine a PlayDays Canada event that invites a child into a series of spaces offering unique opportunities to stimulate the senses, explore and engage. These spaces can incorporate such play themes as water and sand, games, music, painting, science, and fantasy. As play emerges in response to this invitation and engagement, further imagine how the space transforms into that special place of magic, with children staying for long periods or returning again and again.

This is how we envision children experiencing a PlayDays Canada event. How can we intentionally support this transformation of *space* to *special place*? Let's equip ourselves to tackle this challenge by looking more closely at the set-up of a space meant for play.

B. Spaces with Playful Things to Do

Most PlayDays Canada events include several inviting activity spaces. Each space provides a variety of unique, interesting and playful *things to do*, often within a specific theme. These *things to do* can be very simple (such as playing in a sand pile) or more complex (such as designing and building a playful waterworks system). In all cases, paying attention to key aspects of the design and delivery of activities within the space will maximize the potential for play. Consider these factors:

- the kinds, variety and uniqueness of *things to do*;
- whether these things to do are arranged in a way that invites exploration;





- whether the things to do engage a variety of ages (including multiple generations), ability/disability levels and cultural backgrounds;
- whether the identified things to do invite play that supports children's growth, including their physical, social and cognitive development.

As you plan, imagine the many ways each play space might be transformed into a special place, particularly from a child's perspective. A space with sand, some toys and assorted equipment will, with very little intervention, be magically transformed as children play. Adding water and buried gold rocks multiplies the ways those children can engage with the environment and with each other to create a place with its own special meaning.

As children explore the creative spaces in a PlayDays Canada event,

their experience can be maximized by the subtle interventions of skilled onsite play staff and volunteers. Careful attention to the roles and responsibilities of these individuals is key to making that magic happen.



C. Great Play Animators

Children will often figure out what to do in an inviting play space, quickly moving into the realm of play. At one Play Day, a mother was heard to ask her son as they approached the Building play area, "What are you going to do?" to which he immediately replied, "I'm going to work, of course!"

Maximizing the opportunity and supporting children as they figure out unique and creative things to do requires a great "ringmaster" or facilitator. In other parts of the world, this person is often referred to as a "play animator," a term we'll use from this point forward.

The play animator is skilled at helping a space come alive. He or she will see the sandbox, for example, as a world of opportunity to be awakened with the children, not just a space that attracts children to play on their own and with others. Toward that end, the play animator draws the following techniques and more from a full bag of tricks:

- thoughtfully pre-arranging things to do in the space to inspire children to explore new realms of play;
- asking leading questions of children to determine the story line of their play;
- at opportune times, provoking children with new lines of inquiry and possibilities;





- subtly adding new things to the site, again at opportune times, sometimes to change the style of play, move it in more appropriate directions or simply add an interesting twist;
- always watching for cues and listening directly or indirectly to the children to promote and support creative and safe play;
- inviting children at opportune times to reflect on what they are doing, fostering a deeper understanding of the activity.

It is no exaggeration to say that the success of a PlayDays Canada event largely depends on the quality of its play animators. Some spaces are best led by individuals with specific expertise in the chosen activity, but in all cases play animators should be selected for their understanding of children's play and their ability to maintain a child-centred focus. Pre-event orientation also can help to reinforce the leadership approach outlined above.

Play Weekend

take a weekend

fill it with games

spice it with

co-operative games

season with feelings

Chop and Slice – carefully

and stir

Sprinkle with joy

a pinch of excitement

a teaspoon of originality and a sprig of

wonderful adventure

in all shapes and sizes

- nic (IPA Sweden)





Planning: Making the Ordinary !Extraordinary!

Much has been written about special event preparation and delivery. We assume you have access to these materials as well as direct experience in hosting a special event. That said, we would like to pass along a few planning tips picked up over the years that help make a PlayDay stand out from the ordinary event.

Experience tells us that a successful PlayDay, one that truly sparks the imagination by challenging and engaging all children in play, requires initial attention to the planning process. Carefully consider who will be involved in the planning and outline their roles and responsibilities.

We recommend establishing several distinct, yet integrated, teams:

- **Dream Team.**

Entrust this group with establishing an overall vision or dream for the event, identifying the various activity spaces and locating the spaces on the site. This team should include children and youth, early childhood educators, artists, recreation specialists and ideally a landscape architect. Dare to dream! Members of a Play Day group in Munich, Germany say they often dream up ideas they aren't sure how to turn into reality. Not to be deterred, they bring in engineers, carpenters and other specialists to help realize the possibilities. (see Appendix I and III)

- **Specific Play Space Design Teams.**

Once the play spaces are designated, assign a design and implementation team to every space. Using the 'Success Ingredients' as a guide, each team is tasked to creatively think through how the activity offering is to work. They will then determine all logistics for successful implementation. These include the space layout, and accessibility considerations, and site animation needs. (see Appendix I and III)





- **Coordination and Implementation Team.**

It's important for a team to oversee all general details for coordinating and carrying out the overall event. Besides the many elements that go into delivering a well-run event, this group arranges appropriate staff and volunteer orientations, with special emphasis on the play animator. This team also ensures that necessary supplies are on hand and that each site is set up according to plan. (see Appendix I)

Organizational configurations will change depending on the size and scope of the event, time constraints and availability of staff and volunteers. Certainly a key goal of every PlayDay planning process is to build the team(s) needed to host an extraordinary event.





Eight Great Places to Play

Previous sections discuss how a *space* for play can become a special *place* for each child who experiences and engages with the various *things to do*. This section outlines eight proven play themes – themes that often succeed in becoming *special places* as children play. Some, such as sand, are very basic in design and delivery; others can be quite sophisticated. Each supports unique forms of play.

As you browse the following ideas and imagine how you might use them, keep in mind that these are just a few of the myriad playful options that can be incorporated into a PlayDays Canada event. A few additional options are listed at the end of this section. Perhaps these ideas will pique your interest in developing yet other themes.





Games Place

Space

Games can take place in both indoor and outdoor settings, using grassed or hard surfacing. Generally a flat space works best. The space should be defined in some way, using any number of devices such as chalk lines, cones, rope or even straw bales.

Things to Do

Many playful things can be done in a space for games:

A. Organized cooperative games

When skillfully chosen and led, cooperative games work well for involving a wide range of participants, regardless of age and level of ability. Games are available to fit nearly any situation, from ice-breakers to highly active or quieter reflective games. Develop a list of games prior to the event and work through them as the day progresses.

B. Organized sport activities



At any time during a PlayDay, an organized game can begin. Soccer is often an excellent option, since wide variety of users can play

and the game works in just about any setting. Many other possibilities exist; you might try Ultimate Frisbee, football, soccer-baseball, volleyball, and modified versions of winter Olympic sports.

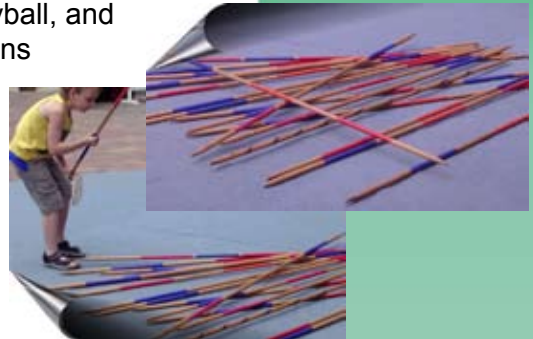
Consider modifying the sport to invite greater participation, for example by introducing more balls into a soccer match or adding both sides' street hockey scores until the total reaches a magic number of, say, 100!

C. Spontaneous active games

Leaving loose equipment out will inspire all kinds of games. Often these spontaneous activities emerge after an organized game or sport activity has ended.

D. Board games

A nice addition to an event, board games offer children opportunities to slow down and engage in alternative ways. A quiet space under a tree with a variety of board games can set the scene invitingly.





Play Animator Selection and Preparation

A successful Games Place depends heavily on play animators who go out of their way to invite participants to enjoy all the wonders of games play. Often a play animator has only a few minutes to excite potential participants and explain how a game works before children look to something else.



Knowing the games and activities beforehand is crucial, as is an ability to explain the rules clearly and concisely and read whether the audience understands.

Finding skilled cooperative games leaders is important for this activity space. Workshopping games prior to the event is a good way to ensure all play animators are prepared. Work closely with play animators to make sure a variety of organized games, sports and spontaneous opportunities is offered throughout the day.



Space to Place

A well-run Games area will quickly become a place where many participants stay for long periods or return time and again. You know you've got it going when children offer their own favourite games to play, modify games to make them fairer for others or spontaneously make up new games. Those who really do have to leave often find someone to replace them to ensure the game is able to continue!

Rules of Thumb

- Know the games beforehand and have a comprehensive list of available options.
- Have the necessary equipment on hand to play the various games.
- Make loose equipment available to encourage spontaneous games.
- Always be on alert for activities that need modifying so everyone can participate.
- Redirect potentially harmful behaviours.





Water Play Place

Space

Many spaces are suitable for water play. The side of a grassy hill or a long flat space can be used for water sliding. Other water play simply needs a space where water can be contained, whether indoors or outdoors. In either case, you'll need

both a water source and a way to empty the water. Some play requires a continuous flow of water – and a way to drain the constant flow. In other cases, you'll fill and empty the container just once during the event.

Things to do

Water offers endless opportunity for play. Here are a few unique ideas for water play that have worked their magic at various PlayDay events.

A. Slide

Big plastic sliders covered in water, whether on the side of a hill or on flat ground, add to the fun at many PlayDays around the world.

B. Small water tanks or pools

You can easily build a water container of any size. Simply create a frame of wood, milk crates or hay bales, cover the frame with plastic tarping and fill the tarp with water. In several Play Day events, children used these pools to try out boats they had built.

C. Goopy Swamp

Children at one PlayDay were invited to enter into a plastic wading pool that contained goopy muck, awful feeling jelly fish (sponges) and a variety of other assorted squishy things!





D. Water Works System

This great water activity begins with several lengths of PVC pipe, assorted PVC joints, milk crates and large plastic cones. The children develop their own water works system by connecting the PVC units and arranging them on milk crates and cones, then running water through the resulting labyrinth. This activity often becomes a lesson in gravity as the children work to ensure that the water flows downhill. Where a constant source of water isn't available, children build the system to empty back into the source of water, often a small pool. Pumps are then needed to draw the water up to the highest pipe.



E. Tubes and Squirt Bottles

At one PlayDay, children had great fun running along and over long plastic tubes filled with water. They also used squirt bottles to push a small ball toward a goal in a game of tabletop water soccer.



F. Mudworks

Water and dirt make a wondrous mixture of oozing muck, especially when contained in a large space. Children at one PlayDay took great delight in the muck – and in having the muck hosed off. Adding to the fun, the local fire department came onsite to do the hosing.



G. Bubbles

Bubbles big and small are always a great addition to a PlayDay.



Play Animator Selection and Preparation

In situations such as sliding, leadership is relatively straightforward. For more complex activities such as a water works system or boat building, play animators need to be adept at supporting different ages – asking leading questions in some cases,

leading by example at other times and suggesting alternatives when needed. We recommend that play animators test out the more complex activities prior to the day, working through various scenarios and envisioning how children will respond.

Space to Place

Water, like sand, is one of the most basic elements supporting play. It doesn't take much for children to be attracted to a space that has water – and for that space to become a special place. For more complex activities such as the water system, the dynamic at work can lead to some interesting twists. Older children often collaborate to get the system built and in working order, then move on to something else. Younger children soon gravitate to

the place to test out the system and before you know it, magical play has emerged. Depending on the needs of their play, the younger set may make a variety of alterations to the initial system. For all participants, this space has now become a special place.

Rules of thumb

- For sliding and other rambunctious water play, develop a safety plan.
- Weather can be a significant factor with water activities. Keep a watchful eye out for children who may be too cold from being wet.
- For activities that involve water and dirt, provide an area for washing off.
- Have enough equipment on hand for the expected numbers.





Sand Play Place

Space

Most PlayDay sites come equipped with areas for sand play. If the sand area is part of a playground, you may want to add temporary borders to more clearly define the space. If unavailable onsite, sand can be

hauled in at relatively little expense. In this case, place the sand in a shady area for the comfort and safety of both play animators and participants.

Things To Do

Sand, like water and boxes, is a foundational tool for supporting play. Small children in particular are drawn to sand play like ducks to water and generally spend hours absorbed in the world they imagine and create. Depending on the size of space and type of sand, a Play-Day can offer any number of sand play options.

H. Simple Sand Play

Sand and lots of loose equipment may be all that is required for a PlayDay event. Access to water is a bonus!

I. Project Sand Play

Possibilities for sand projects abound. Just a few:

- Dig for buried treasure based on an ever evolving story theme and ongoing replacement of the treasure.
- Build a small town using lots of loose parts.
- Establish a cooking area with a stove made of cardboard boxes and a place to wash dishes.





Themed Sand Play

Think of any theme, and a possibility for sand play is not far behind.

Canada Day Celebrations can stimulate all kinds of theme related sand play activities. At one Play-Day, children built a world of sand mounds topped with small Canada Day flags.

Sand Castle building activities never go out of style. With a proliferation of sand sculpting events, artists have provided endless new theme ideas for creating with sand. Sea animal sand sculptures, anyone?

Play Animator Selection and Preparation

Play animators with early childhood experience are well suited to the sand play area. Generally very astute at observing cues as children's needs change and new ideas emerge, they intervene subtly when required.

One new junior leader remarked at how senior leaders worked behind the scenes to replant treasure for new discoveries, add loose parts here and there to support the play and move activities in different directions when play threatened to turn negative. She expressed new-found appreciation of sand play and of the role adept leaders can play in supporting sand playfulness. To facilitate that approach, work out play possibilities prior to the event and review those ideas in detail with the play animators involved.

Space to Place

Younger children are usually the first to arrive at a PlayDay event, and the sand area is the first place they tend to visit. Play emerges quickly here. In no time, children develop a new play world of their own. For some children, a well set up sand area can become home base during their entire time at PlayDay.

Rules of Thumb

- Have lots of loose equipment on hand.
- Where possible, have a source of water nearby.
- Mound up a part of the sand area if possible.
- If you need to haul in sand, make sure it is clean.
- If you need to haul sand away, find someone who can make use of it, such as a local sand volleyball club.





Blocks, Boxes and Building Place

Space

Box, blocks and building spaces lend themselves to any number of initial arrangements, both indoors and out. Children working with small blocks need a relatively small space,

which can be located in a quieter area of the site. Construction that involves large boxes, wood and/or straw bales, on the other hand, demands a much larger area.

Things To Do

A. Blocks

Options abound for working with blocks. Some companies produce uniform size wooden blocks and encourage participants to find any number of creative ways to use them.



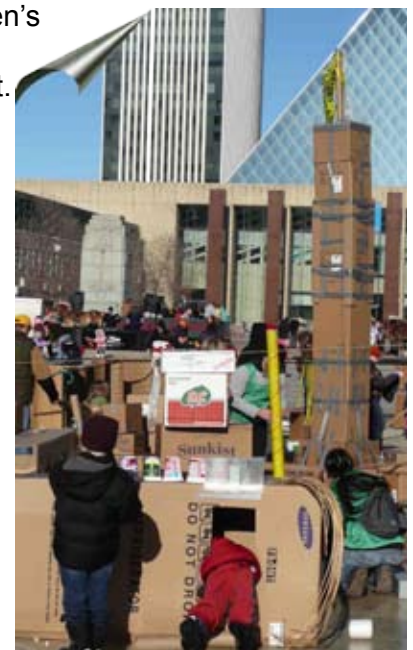
Others offer blocks in different sizes and shapes and materials. In either case, simply putting out the blocks is often enough to stimulate children's creative juices. Some Play-Days enhance block play by suggesting quite elaborate scenarios such as historic towns. Once established, such themes can be fleshed out with participants.



B. Boxes

It is often said that children need nothing more than a box to break out in play. We couldn't agree more. Boxes of different shapes and sizes invite children to imagine houses, tunnels, hiding places and many other spaces. Leaders can explore more complex ideas with children, including large robots or a castle. Throughout one PlayDay, boxes of the same size were stacked on top of each other, supported by a combination of tape and ropes.

At the end of the event, the ropes were released and the box tower came tumbling down, to the children's great delight.





C. Building

Children love to build things, and PlayDay is a great place to provide this opportunity. At some events, children build small wooden structures such as bird houses, toys and sailboats that they can take home. At others, children cooperatively build and create much larger structures such as ships, huts and lean-tos. Materials used might include wood, cardboard, straw bales and tarping.



Play Animator Selection and Preparation

For some *things to do* such as playing with blocks, leadership is relatively straightforward. For more complex activities such as developing scenarios with boxes or building structures, the play animator needs to be adept at supporting different ages – asking leading questions in some cases, leading by example at other times and suggesting alternatives when needed. We recommend that play animators test out the proposed activities prior to the day, working through various scenarios for more complex activities.



a fur trade fort, a boat and a dock. Once the structures were more or less complete, the children adopted roles and played out the old days in endless fun.

Space to Place

Children will find myriad ways to work with various building materials, both big and small. Creative play leaders facilitate the play to deeper, more sophisticated levels by helping to transform the space into a special place. At one PlayDay, children and play leaders together spent endless hours arranging boxes in playful configurations and then playing in and around them. Throughout another PlayDay, children created

Rules of Thumb

- All projects should be of a scope that can be completed during the PlayDay.
- Try all identified projects beforehand to test whether they can be easily completed by children.
- Building structures requires special attention to safety. Establish building protocols beforehand and provide mini-orientations on use of tools as the children cycle through. Also keep a watchful eye on the progress of the various structures.





Mazes and Obstacle Courses Place

Space

Mazes and obstacles courses can sprout virtually anywhere and in any

size, although the bigger the space available the better.

Things to Do

Magical things can happen in mazes and obstacle courses, especially when children are involved in the initial building. The range of materials and configurations and approaches is limited only by the imagination. Below are just a few of the activities we've seen:

A. Obstacle courses

- In Edmonton, an obstacle course built from straw bales and loose parts grew into a luge track celebrating the Winter Olympics that were on at the time.
- In Germany, one course used a variety of boards, odd shaped gymnastics mats and other obstacles, ending with a dive into a large net filled with gymnastic balls.
- Another PlayDay included a spider web of string between two structures through which the children could pass.

B. Mazes

- In Hong Kong, one maze was built of boxes and ropes strung through trees with blankets slung over them.
- We've also seen children having great fun in an air-filled, blow-up maze.





Play Animator Selection and Preparation

Mazes and obstacle courses are quite physical and provide creative challenge for participants. It's best to choose play animators who enjoy supporting physically based play. Leaders also need to be adept at reading cues that the children are seeking new challenges or thinking of additions that will require assistance. Prior to the event, leaders should receive orientation that alerts them to the possibilities offered by these play spaces and suggests creative ways to engage all participants.



Space to Place

Children love a challenge. If a space provides ever-progressing or changing challenges, children will return again and again for new experiences. The space becomes that much more special when children have a part in creating the configurations and challenges.



Rules of Thumb

- Gather enough materials of different varieties to make the mazes and obstacles interesting.
- Pay attention to safety when building the various structures, particularly for smaller children.
- Constantly look for ways to make the course or maze more interesting and challenging with and for children of all ages and abilities.





Painting Place

Space

The space given to painting will vary widely, depending on the scope of the activity.

Painting can occur indoors or outdoors and during any season.

Things to Do

A. Free Painting

Make paints available and invite children to create on their own terms. Painting tools might include hands, fingers, feet, brushes, potatoes and sponges.



B. Project Painting

PlayDays can offer children opportunities to paint one segment of a larger work. In some situations, an artist creates an overall concept and invites children to participate. At one PlayDay, children painted flags and sails for a ship that was being built elsewhere onsite. In another, children helped to make large, playful gears and painted the gears in colourful hues before assembling them. At yet another event, youth were invited to paint an eye onto uniformly shaped plaques. Each plaque was glued onto a piece of plywood to make a 'moseyeic'!



C. Theme Painting

If your event has an overall theme, consider how the painting space might invite investigation of the theme. A Canada Day theme, for example, suggests any number of theme related painting projects – from small hand flags to painted hats and T-shirts to large renderings of the red maple leaf.





D. Chalk Works

Always a great addition to a Play Day event, chalk works invite children to create with chalk on sidewalk or other appropriate surfaces.

Play Animator Selection and Preparation

Play animator selection will depend on the things chosen to do in the space. Free painting activities and smaller painting projects will benefit from play animators with early childhood training who have experience in supporting self-directed play. Unique, project oriented activities and themed paintings are best led by artists who can provide overall vision, map out the logistics and work with children to realize possibilities for the vision.

Space to Place

Children of all ages will return again and again to a space that provides an opportunity to paint. They may come back to work on new ideas, or perhaps to show a caregiver or friend what they have done. Unique projects will attract some to stay for long stretches or to return to see how the work is progressing. Where the project transforms the space, children will sometimes shift from painting to using the item or backdrop as a prop for play. In short order, the *space* has become that *special place*.

Rules of Thumb

- Supplies, supplies, supplies – you can never have enough.
- Be constantly vigilant to ensure everyone has access to paint and painting implements.
- Allow for a mess *and* leave time to clean it all up.
- Provide a clean-up space for both people and implements.





Science Place

Space

Many science activities can be done in a relatively small area, indoors or out. Where room is available, more complex projects requiring larger spaces can be considered.

Things to Do

Experiencing science through play can give children a whole new perspective on this exciting world. Below are a few ideas we've come across that playfully engage the children.

A. Scientific Experiments

- At a PlayDay in Vancouver, a local science expert invited children to try out a wide variety of neat experiments. They made volcanoes, caused a mini-oil spill and worked with extremely gooey stuff that was one moment soft and runny and the next moldable into all kinds of shapes.
- At a winter PlayDay in Edmonton, children conducted a variety of experiments with ice, snow and food colouring.
- At a community-based PlayDay beside a school with a small pond, children conducted a variety of experiments with the rich pond life.
- Arvind Gupta from India has a marvelously simple approach to playful science experiments using toys. One PlayDay dedicated a space to Arvind Gupta's toys and associated



experiments, many of which can be found at www.arvindgupta.com.



B. Building and Playing with Structures that Illustrate Science

- In Munich, Germany, children worked with an artist to build a very tall, spiraling wooden track. They used pulleys to lift a ball and send it down the track, illustrating the science of gravity. At the same PlayDay, another artist worked with children to create large gears, paint them and fill them with gravel. They then fixed the gears to a stand, where they could be turned.
- In Berlin, children created structures out of rolled paper, providing great illustrations of scientific principles related to structural strength and integrity.

Arvind Gupta has numerous instructions for small playful structures, such as a geodesic dome from scrap materials. With a little ingenuity, you can invite children to create these toys on much larger scales.



Play Animator Selection and Preparation

Play animators with an interest in promoting science through play are ideal for your Science Space. Some communities have organizations that specialize in playful science and can provide the leaders, activities and materials. Failing that, look for a local teacher who has a knack for making science fun through creative and interesting experiments. Or find a local artist who works with children on interesting and playful, science oriented art initiatives.

Note that PlayDay Science Space differs from the more traditional method of demonstrating science and asking leading questions about what is transpiring. Instead, play animators need strategies to actively and playfully engage the participants in all aspects of a specific science activity. They also need to be vigilant in watching for cues regarding participants' progress with the various projects – stepping in from time to time to help out, suggesting alternatives, reflecting on the scientific principles at work, introducing new activities to the mix and celebrating new discoveries.





Space to Place

Playful science activities that are within participants' comfort level will generally serve as a magnet for children. Once engaged, children will put intense concentration into the activities to see them through and to explore various experimental alternatives. Following a period of focus, the children will likely move to other areas of the site, but don't be surprised if they return again and again to *their* place of scientific exploration and discovery.

Rules of Thumb

- Plan carefully to ensure you have enough materials on hand, and ration them to avoid running out before the day ends.
- Ensure the science activity mix will appeal to a broad range of participants.
- Provide enough space to handle the expected numbers.
- When using chemicals and other liquids such as oil, consider how they will be disposed of or recycled during and following the event. This is an opportunity to model environmental responsibility.





Circus Works Place

Space

Circus activities can spring up just about anywhere. At one PlayDay, an impromptu circus took shape in

a small area of a field; at another, circus activities occurred inside a big-top tent.

Things to Do

How cool is it to try genuine circus activities? Very cool! Circus acts are a challenge, but we are always amazed how quickly children pick up even the most difficult activities.

A. See and Try

At a PlayDay in Munich, Germany a large trunk was brought out that contained a wide variety of circus materials. Within seconds, children of all ages and abilities were giving these circus items a try:

- juggling balls
- diablos
- spinning plates
- balancing boards
- unicycles
- stilts
- hoola hoops

B. Improve Skills

Through leader and peer support, children are challenged to improve on the skills they have developed, such as juggling in different ways or walking on stilts for 120 more steps than last time.





C. Put on a Show

In some circus spaces, children can progress to a point where they can work on a routine and show off their new-found skills for others.

Play Animator Selection and Preparation

For Circus Spaces, it is ideal to employ play animators who can do most of the activities offered. It is even better if they know the best sequence for building skills and can pass along "tricks of the trade" so participants quickly gain some measure of success. If you are hoping to develop circus routines, leaders should have a core set of circus performance ideas in mind along with strategies for encouraging participation. If no one proficient in the circus activities is available, keen novice leaders can work alongside participants to seek some measure of success. It always seems that someone comes along who can do a circus activity half decently, and it isn't long before others are trying to imitate what they see.

Space to Place

Circus tricks can be quite difficult to do at the outset. Children will often give them a try and leave. But it isn't long before they come back to try again. For many, being able to progress in the activities and/or work out a routine will ensure that Circus Works leaves many special memories, not to mention skills that can last a lifetime.



Rules of Thumb

- Consider participant safety as you design the space and plan the activities. Diablos falling from the sky can hurt when they land on someone; unicycle riders need to be supported in the early stages.
- Having enough equipment of different varieties provides opportunity for many users to experience the joys of doing circus tricks.





More Play Places

We've fleshed out eight great places for play. But as noted out the outset, those merely scratch the surface of play options. Some additional places we have seen over the years include these:

- fantasy
- music
- gardening
- flying
- skateboarding and in-line skating
- welding and tin smithing
- wax works
- paper making works
- senses stimulation





Appendix I

PlayDay Planning Template

As your PlayDay program takes shape and the various Places for Play are identified, it helps to put it all together using a planning template.

The following template has been used many times to organize Play-Day events. You may wish to adapt it to fit your own circumstances – or use as is.

Play Place	Things to Do	Materials	Animators	Space Planning	Safety	Accessibility Considerations
	Description of the creative and unique activities that will be offered	Description of the creative material requirements for each activity	Requirements for animators in terms of numbers and special skills	Description of the creative and unique activities that will be offered	Outlines of measures to be taken for ensuring participant safety	Outline of measures that will be taken to ensure those with disabilities can participate
Games						
Water						
Sand						
Blocks, Boxes and Buildings						
Mazes and Obstacles						
Painting						
Science						
Circus						





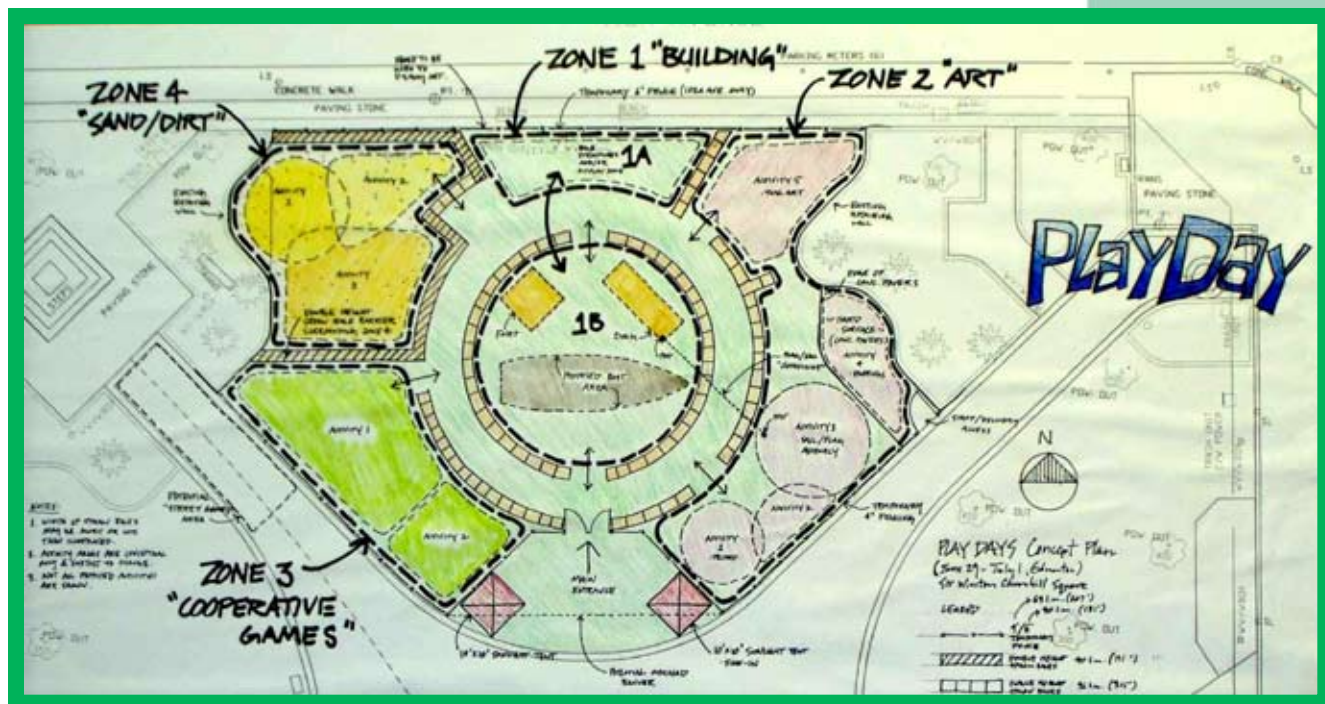
Appendix II

PlayDay Site Plan

Once the PlayDay is planned, it is a good idea to locate the various activities and supporting amenities on a site plan. This exercise has many advantages:

- ensures the best use of available space;
- confirms whether activities are located near supporting amenities such as water;
- ensures access and traffic flow to and through the site;
- provides a consistent document for set-up, leaders, vendors and visitors.

The following PlayDay site plan was prepared by a landscape architect based on input by the planning committee. Note attention to traffic flow, relationships between the various play areas, creative use of the available space and the clearly defined perimeter. In this plan, straw bales and a quick fence were used as defining elements. The quick fence in turn was decorated during the event with various works of art from the Art Place.





Appendix III

Where to Find Materials

Having enough materials on hand is important if all participants are to enjoy the various PlayDay *things to do*. Finding enough materials of the kind needed, at an affordable price,

is an art unto itself. Below are two great scrounge lists, with thanks to PLAE Inc. and Dr. Gary Pennington, professor emeritus, University of British Columbia.

PLAE Inc.'s Scrounge List

Department Stores

Stocking boxes, lingerie boxes, fabric swatches, rug pieces, corrugated packing cardboard, packing boxes from appliances and pianos, Styrofoam packing material, decorative displays, old posters and business forms, shoe boxes, envelopes, etc.

Art Supply Stores, Stationery Stores

Leftover or damaged paper, stock (paint, pencils, paper clips, staplers, markers, etc.)

Dollar Stores

Unwanted boxes; leftover or damaged crayons, toys, school supplies, etc.

Architects

Blueprints and blueprint paper, slide rules and other tools

Drug Stores

Small plastic bottles, crayons, other school supplies

Billboard Companies

Pieces of billboards to use as posters, wall coverings, etc.

Electric Power Companies

Wire, large spools, assorted packing materials

Building Supply Companies

Wood and lumber, tiles, wallpaper books, colour samples, leftover Formica, damaged bricks

Furniture Stores and Factories

Large packing boxes, packing material, fabric scraps, etc.

Bottling Firms

Bottle caps, large cardboard tubes

Garment Factories, Clothing Firms

Buttons, decorative tape, ribbon, yarn, trim, spools, fasteners, fabric, scraps, etc.

Churches

Old candles

Gift Shops, Boutiques

Candles, packing boxes, Styrofoam packing materials, wrapping paper, ribbon, etc.

Container Companies

Large cardboard sheets, damaged containers – sturdy and uniform size





Grocery Stores, Supermarkets, Outdoor Markets

Cartons, packing materials, fruit crates, large cardboard and materials from displays, discarded display racks, Styrofoam fruit trays, baskets of any sort

Contractors, Lumber Companies

Lumber, pipes, wire, tiles, wallpaper, linoleum, molding wood, wood curls, concrete, etc.

Hardware Stores

Sample hardware books, sample tile charts, linoleum samples, rope, chain, wood, molding strips, etc.

Hospitals, Hotels

Clean, discarded sheets and pillowcases

Plumbers, Plumbing Suppliers

Wires, pipes, tile scraps, and linoleum

Leather Craft Companies (pocketbook, belts & shoe makers)

Scraps of leather and lacings

Repair Shops

Unclaimed appliances (preferably working), record players, typewriters, sewing machines, clocks, fans, etc.

Newspapers

Large rolls of paper for graphic recording

Restaurants, Ice Cream Stores

Ice cream containers, cords, boxes and cartons, bottle caps

Offices

Discontinued business forms and posters (anything blank on one side). Pencils and erasers, office furniture, file cabinets, lamps, typewriters, envelopes (used OK)

Rug Companies

Leftovers or scraps, sample swatches, carpet pieces

Paint Stores

Leftover paint samples, sample books, wallpaper books, rolls of wallpaper, tiles, linoleum, etc.

Textile Companies, Upholsterers, and Tailors

Color samples, scraps, or pieces of material, spools, buttons, cord, string, etc.

Paper Companies, Printing Companies

Endcuts and damaged paper and posters (blank on one side) – any size, weight or colour

Tile and Ceramic Companies

Leftover or damaged tile

Phone Companies

Colored wires, old phones, large spools

Toy Stores

Leftover damaged products, packing materials, boxes, etc.

Plastic Companies

Trimmings, cuttings, tubing, scrap plastic and Plexiglas





Gary Pennington's Scrounge List

- newspapers
- pantyhose
- rubber bands
- cardboard boxes (the bigger the better)
- milk cartons
- bottle tops, or jar lids
- doweling
- plastic bottles
- old, colourful wool
- pieces of wood
- plywood
- plastic ice cream cartons and lids
- old oil drums or paint barrels (clean, of course)
- rug cuttings
- rug cores
- binder twine or old rope
- bamboo pieces
- discarded traffic cones (preferably not stolen)
- old tennis racquets (broken strings are fine)
- old tennis balls
- old wind-up alarm clocks
- old, colourful rags
- old garden hose
- tubing
- deflated balls
- old mops or brooms
- old casters
- broken laundry baskets
- netting
- pieces of foam
- old hinges
- wooden boxes or crates
- cardboard toilet paper rolls
- spools
- cupcake tins
- burlap sacks
- dyes
- wax
- t-shirts
- bed sheets
- marbles

