

# HOW TO PLAN, ORGANIZE, AND IMPLEMENT A PLAYDAY



PREPARED BY IPA/USA-

**THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE CHILD'S RIGHT  
TO PLAY**

AFFILIATE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PLAY ASSOCIATION: PROMOTING THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY

Contact information and support can be found at [www.ipausa.org](http://www.ipausa.org).

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# I. WHAT IS IPA/USA?

IPA/USA is the American Affiliate of the International Play Association: Promoting the Child's Right to Play. The purpose of this organization is to protect, preserve, and promote play as a fundamental right for all humans. Membership is open to any individual, group, or organization which endorses the right of children to play, stated in the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), Article 7, paragraph 3: "The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavor to promote the enjoyment of the right..." and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 31:

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

IPA/USA holds a national conference every three years and sponsors or cosponsors workshops and symposia from time to time. A quarterly newsletter is available on the website that features articles on play environments, safety, toys and materials, play leadership, and the role of play in child development. IPA International publishes an international journal called PlayRights and hosts a World Conference every three years.

## IF YOU BELIEVE THAT:

- Play, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter, and education, is vital for the development of the potential of all children, and family participation needs to be strengthened by support systems such as a play leadership, and
- Environments and programs to meet children's real needs should be created.

## IF YOU ARE CONCERNED THAT:

- Society is indifferent to the importance of play,
- Schools are indifferent to the importance of play,
- Children are increasingly living with inadequate provision for survival and development,
- Children are increasingly living in inappropriate housing settings with less spaces to play,
- Children are neglected in environmental planning,
- Cultural traditions are deteriorating.
- Children are increasingly exploited commercially,
- Children are constantly exposed to war, violence, and destruction,
- "Winning at all costs" dominates children's sports and play,
- Children are increasingly being scheduled into prescriptive days of sports and academics,

THEN PLEASE CONSIDER BECOMING A MEMBER OF IPA/USA and become a part of an international, interdisciplinary organization that supports and works for the Child's Right To Play.

## II. WHAT IS A PLAYDAY?

A PlayDay is fun! It is a day designed to provide a range and diversity of play activities for children and adults of all age levels. A PlayDay can encompass everything from massive park events for thousands of children and adults to small picnics for little ones. It is an opportunity for children, schools, day cares, individuals, families, or communities to share in physical and mental challenges without the pressure of winning or losing "the game." The point of a PlayDay is to play for the sake of playing, to challenge each individual, and to share in the joy of discovery and interaction.



Adults and many children have had the simple pleasures of play replaced with competitive and team sports. A PlayDay will offer a chance to go back to the times when one played just to play. A PlayDay provides the opportunities to exercise the mind as well as the body. The games and activities challenge individuals to use their imagination to create new ways to play each game. Even though some games and activities have rules, the rules are often modified or altered for the benefit of each group that is playing. A PlayDay offers games and activities for toddlers to grandparents, and all ages in between. Some games can be played by all ages, while others should only be played by specific age groups. Play is the important

element of the PlayDay. It requires little more than an imagination, and can continue until everyone is too tired to move. Every play event is successful in its own way.

PlayDays can take on many dimensions depending on the other events that are scheduled. If the day is planned totally around the PlayDay a wide variety of activities can be offered for different size groups. If the PlayDay is part of a larger event such as a Kidfest, Art Fair, Octoberfest, Springfest, Peace Day, United Nations Day, NAEYC Month of the Young Child, World Day for Children, El Dia Del Los Ninos, or other community event, the games and activities will vary with the flow of the crowd and the specific mix of people. It is important to keep this factor in mind when planning the games and activities and the number of available play leaders, volunteers, or referees that will be needed.



### III. WHO IS INVOLVED?

PlayDay partners are those individuals, agencies, programs, schools, museums, or organizations that collaborate as partners in planning, hosting, and implementing a PlayDay. These may include, but not be limited to:



- Children, Adults, Parents, Grandparents
- Schools, Teachers, Child Care Centers, Caregivers
- PTA's (National or Local)
- Public Officials, Corporations, Businesses
- Media, Newspapers, Magazines, TV, Radio
- Scouts, Community Organizations
- Universities, Colleges, Students, Faculty
- Cities, Regions, Localities
- Recreation Centers
- Designers and Design Agencies
- City Planners

- United Way & Other Agencies
- ECE Programs ( Head Start, Lab Schools)
- Organizations (Student Organizations, Local NAEYC Affiliates)
- Zoos, Museums
- Partnerships, consortiums, collaboratives with surrounding communities

### IV. HOW ARE THEY INVOLVED? OTHER SUPPORTING EVENTS/ACTIVITIES/COLLABORATIONS

- Games/Tournaments
- Service Learning/Community Service Opportunities
- Celebrations for Children and Families, e.g. The Week of the Young Child
- Play Leadership Workshops
- Playground/Schoolyard Safety Evaluation Event
- Playground Building Seminars/Workshops
- Awards for Excellence in Play or Design
- Articles in Newspapers, Reports of TV/Radio
- Initiation/Completion of Play Projects, Bumper Stickers
- Conference about Play
- Presidential, Mayoral, Gubernatorial Proclamations or Declarations
- Contests, e.g., Ball Bouncing, Hula Hoops, other benefits



## V. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. SITE

1.1 The site can be indoors as well as outside (museums, parks, zoos).

1.2 The site will determine the appropriateness of certain games due to the surface material. The games played on grass can be much more physical and challenging than games played on asphalt or on a gymnasium floor. At the same time, games played indoors can be oriented toward bouncing and skill activities; it is important that the games are appropriate for the flooring surface(s) available



1.3 An outdoor site should have protection from the sun and in case of inclement weather, the elements.

1.4 If at all possible, an indoor site should have some soft surface for little people or to accommodate physical games played by others.

1.5 For first time organizers: the site should be readily accessible by the public with free parking and areas for groups to gather.

### 2. AGE GROUPS

2.1 It is best to play games with age groups divided into Little People, Middle People, and Big People. Little People are toddlers up to age five or six. Middle People are from six to twelve years. Big People are thirteen to adult. The divisions are more for motor and physical development than anything else. It is very easy for a teenage boy or girl to run down a five year old!



2.2 Of course the size divisions are also for different types of play. Toddlers are more interest in solo play and one on one play, whereas teens and adults like active team type games.

2.3 For first time organizers: Begin with only one age group the first year such as Little People.

### 3. PLAY LEADERS

3.1 Play Leaders are one of the most important parts of a PlayDay. They can be teachers, administrators, child care workers, parents, college students, or community volunteers (adults or youth). They are there to promote safety and creative, free flowing games throughout the day. The Play Leader can make simple games and activities more of a challenge and fun by inserting his or her imagination into the game!

3.2 The Play Leaders supervise activities and make creative suggestions for greater participation. Most of the time the players will self-referee, but occasionally a game will need a ruling. Since most of the games don't have winners or losers, the ruling can have a twist, or the Play Leader can allow the groups to decide by a vote. In some cases, the activity can just be started over!

3.3 The Play Leaders also ensure that no player is overly physical. Older children and even adults do not realize when they are playing beyond the ability of other players. A subtle hint by the Play Leader can make the game more fun for the other players and ensure that no one gets hurt.



3.4 Anyone can be a Play Leader! If possible, tee shirts should be provided for new Play Leaders. Refereeing at a PlayDay is more about facilitating play than officiating a game.

3.5 A good Play Leader will watch the games more for the way the game is being played than to judge the fairness of the play. If the Play Leader sees that the play is taking a new direction or an idea just pops into his or her mind, then the Play Leader should change the rules. The Play Leader can also suggest to players that they might want to change the game.

3.6 Play Leaders can also add a new game or change the current game to alleviate lulls in the play due to the abilities and attitudes of the players.

## 4. GAMES

4.1 The types of games played are determined for each play site and play group; indoor games will differ from outdoor games, hard surface games differ from soft surface games, Little People games differ from Big People games.

4.2 If it is impossible to determine the site characteristics or the specific age groups, then a wide variety of games must be planned. Remember, it is better to eliminate a game than to have an injured player. If the game is too complex, change the rules or play another game. The nice thing about a PlayDay is that it doesn't have a formula.



4.3 When organizing the game schedule, plan to alternate between active and passive games. This will give both players and Play Leaders an opportunity to rest. Also, if the PlayDay is combined with another event, a mix of new players will result. The alternating games will give the Play Leaders a much needed break.

4.4 Some games are much more popular and attract large crowds of players than others. PlayDays can include many activities (e.g., adventure play activities, face painting, arts and crafts, other sports events, and food).

- 4.5 For first time organizers: Games should remain as open-ended as possible (e.g. cardboard boxes, sandboxes, bales of hay, bubble blowing, and sidewalk chalk).
- 4.6 For first time organizers: Allow for free rotation of children from game to game. For example, have the adults divide their children into small groups and rotate them at will when they complete one game and see that another game is available.

## 5. Environmental Challenges

- 5.1 Be cognizant of environmental challenges when planning the location for PlayDay. Such concerns might include inclement weather, pollution, contamination issues, and distance from utility poles.

## 6. EQUIPMENT

- 6.1 The equipment for a PlayDay should be as simple and inexpensive as possible. The message to players is that it is not necessary to purchase specific and costly equipment to play. An imaginative mind is the most valuable piece of equipment on the field.
- 6.2 The equipment should be easily replaceable in the event of breakage or loss. If possible, it should be recycled from other uses. Investigate the possible use of recyclable materials such as cardboard, plastic, and hay and sand from the natural environment.



6.3 Some activities to help you get started include the following:

<b>TYPES of GAMES</b>	<b>EQUIPMENT- GAME SUGGESTIONS</b>
Arts and crafts	Sidewalk drawings with colored chalk, jewelry making with recycled materials, sand art with shallow containers and colored sand, face painting with appropriate paints and brushes for skin, drawing/finger painting
Obstacle courses	Use natural objects – piles of dirt, bales of hay, mud puddles, run around trees...
Kite flying	Make a kite and fly it
Parachute games	Parachutes, play balls, tennis/foam balls
String and scarf games	Colored scarves, varying weights of string, music to move by
Hula hoops	Various sizes
Tug of war	Long ropes
Balloon games	Balloons, hose, water balloons
Jump rope games	Jump ropes of varying lengths
Street games	Stickball, hopscotch, Kick the Can
Simple ball games	Beach balls, plastic ball and bat
Frisbee games	Spin a disk on your finger, go for a record throw, skip your disk
Chase and flee games	Freeze Tag, Hide and Seek, Duck, Duck, Goose, Mother May I, Simon Says, Red Light, Green Light
Simple dances	Hokey Pokey, Square Dances, Creative movement, folk dances
Dramatics	Pretend play with props – cardboard boxes for buildings or a stage or spaceship... clothes... small toys
Storytelling and/or reading	Storyteller or reader dressed as a character
General	Markers, name tags, duct tape, mat knife, cardboard, sunscreen, first aid kit, water cooler, hand cart

Try searching the internet for the types of games and activities mentioned above and for the directions on how to play them. You may also want to review the resources listed below to assist you in planning your events.

## RESOURCES

- Bos, B. & Chapman, J. (2005). *Tumbling over the edge – a rant for children’s play*. Roseville, Cal: Turn the Page Press.
- Brown, S. B. & Vaughan, C. (2009). *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul*. Boulder, Colorado: Avery Press.
- Burk, M. C. (2002). *Station games: Fun and imaginative PE lessons*. Champagne, Ill.: Human Kinetics.
- Clements, R. (Ed.) (2000). *Elementary school recess: Selected readings, games, and activities for teachers and parents*. Lake Charles, LA.: American Press.
- Clements, R. & Fiorentino, L. (2000). *The child’s right to play: A global approach*. New York: Praeger.
- Elkind, D. (2007). *The power of play: Learning what comes naturally*. Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press.
- Fluegelman, A. (Ed.) (1976). *The new games book*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Sharon says delete
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- Frost, J. (1992). *Play and playscapes*. Albany, NY: Delmar Publishers Inc
- Goodenough, E. (2008). *A place for play: A companion volume to the Michigan television film "Where Do the Children Play?"* Michigan: National Institute for Play.
- Luvmour, J. & Luvmour,S. (2007). *Everyone wins! : Cooperative games and activities*. BC Canada: New Society Publishers.
- Orlick,T. (2006). *Cooperative games and sports: Joyful activities for everyone*. Champaign, Ill: Human Kinetics Publishing.
- Singer,D. & J. Singer. (1985). *Make believe games and activities to foster imaginative play in young children*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Strother,S. (2008). *The adventurous book of outdoor games: Classic fun for daring boys and girls*. Naperville, Ill : Sourcebooks, Inc.
- Sutherland, C. (2005). *No gym? No problem*. Champaign, Ill: Human Kinetics.
- Wise, D. (2003). *Great big book of children’s games: Over 450 indoor and outdoor games for kids*. McGraw Hill.

# APPENDIX

## A. Helpful Websites

- National Children’s Museum: <http://www.ccm.org>
- Organizing PlayDays: <http://www.kaboom.org>
- Kids games: <http://www.gameskidsplay.net/>
- National Institute for Play: <http://nifplay.org>
- National Recreation & Park Association: <http://www.nrpa.org>
- Play Board: <http://www.playboard.org>
- Play for Peace: <http://www.playforpeace.org>
- Playing for Keeps: <http://www.playingforkeeps.org>
- Project for Public Spaces: <http://www.pps.org>
- Skatepark Association of the United States of America: <http://www.spausa.org>
- Strong National Museum of Play: <http://www.strongmuseum.org>
- Today’s Playground: <http://www.todaysplayground.com>
- Trust for Public Lands: <http://www.tpl.org>
- OMEP-USNC Children’s Day Activity Packet: <http://www.omep-usnc.org/>

**B. WORK PAGE FOR GAMES AND ACTIVITIES**

**GAME/ACTIVITY**

**EQUIPMENT**

**NOTES**

## **C. PLAYDAY QUICK CHECK**

The following forms are provided to enable the designers of the PlayDay to "Quick Check" all the important tasks. The first form was developed to organize and appoint all the possible committees that might be involved in a PlayDay. There will be a PlayDay Chairperson and a possible Co-Chairperson. There will be several committees involved. See Quick Check for suggestions. Blanks are provided for other possible committees.

The second form is to be used by each individual committee. There are blanks provided for the Chair's name and all the members. Specific tasks will then be developed for each committee.

# PLAYDAY QUICK CHECK

IPA/USA ► The AMERICAN AFFILIATE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY

SITE _____		THEME _____		
DATE _____		ANTICIPATED REGISTRATION _____		
TASKS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES
Select PlayDay Chairperson _____ Co-Chairperson _____				
Appoint Committees (Suggestions follow)				
Site/Date/Theme				
Activities/Special Events				
Play Leaders/Volunteers/Staff				
Refreshments				
Fund-Raising				
Publicity				
Celebrities/Special Invited Guests				
Equipment/Materials/Props				
Awards/Certificates				
First Aid Station				
Information Booth/Lost & Found				
Parking Facilities				
Liability Insurance (Parental and Adult Release Forms)				
Security (Site/Building/Equipment)				
Evaluations				
Clean-UP				

# PLAYDAY QUICK CHECK FOR COMMITTEES

IPA/USA ► The AMERICAN AFFILIATE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY

SITE \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE \_\_\_\_\_

THEME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ANTICIPATED REGISTRATION \_\_\_\_\_

COMMITTEE \_\_\_\_\_  
 CHAIRMAN \_\_\_\_\_  
 CO-CHAIRMAN \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERS \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

TASKS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE	DATE COMPLETED	NOTES