

HOME ECONOMICS

GUIDE

AUG 31 1982



*Published by the University of Missouri-Columbia
Extension Division
College of Home Economics*

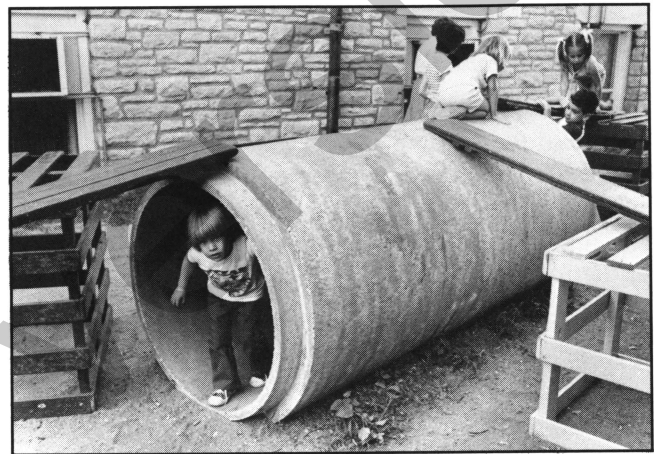
Playgrounds for Children

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Children learn by playing—both indoors and outdoors. Outdoor spaces have great learning value, especially if they are designed for children. Sometimes outdoor areas or playgrounds are used as just a place to let the kids loose. But, children can develop in many ways as they play on the playground, and it should be considered an extension of indoor learning.

The outdoor space should provide a child with comfortable feelings—protection, privacy, space for freedom and movement, and space for physical, social, and cognitive development. Planners should consider safety, space conservation, easy supervision, and thrift.



Children Need Open Space

Children need room to roam and run. Child-initiated activities in the open space may include a game of softball, playing tigers and lions or rolling in the grass. An adult might initiate free movement by providing music and leaves to toss or scarfs to wave in the breeze. It might be fun to have juice and tell a story outside when the weather is nice. How about taking the easel outside?

Children Need a Paved Area

A paved area is usually needed for wheel toys. Children can make traffic lanes for traffic flow, signs and signals, or play police officers. If your play yard is hard, there are other ways to use the surface - bouncing balls, building with blocks and playing with chalk either by drawing creatively on the ground or making a hopscotch.

Children Need a Place for Large-Muscle Play

A climbing set, play sculpture, or a tree for climbing should be provided. Climbing, sliding, and swinging can

be provided with a limited budget by using big logs, railroad ties, a mound of dirt, tree stumps, or suitable scrap materials. Children like activities where they can move freely and experience adventure and challenge. Let children take small risks and prove to themselves that they can be successful in meeting these challenges.

Children Need a place for Water Play

When the weather is nice, water can be used in a variety of ways. Children may suggest many uses or you may want to plan water activities:

- water the plants
- wash the trikes
- “paint” the building
- blow bubbles
- float or sink objects
- run through the sprinkler
- make a sand castle by adding water to the sand
- splash or wade (in the summer)
- bathe dolls

Children Need a Place for Digging and Planting

Sand—An area for sand can be provided with hand garden tools, old pots and pans, strainers, spoons, plastic bottles, and funnels.

Mud or dirt—A digging area with small shovels, rakes, and hand tools should be used in unstructured play. Children love to watch things grow, especially if they have planted and watered them. Part of the digging area can be blocked off with a rock border or string and made into a planting area. It can be fun to plant wild flowers, plants, or garden vegetables. And what excitement there is when a worm is found!

Children Need a Place for Dramatic Play

Children like to pretend so provide opportunities for them to imitate various roles such as cowboys, cowgirls, astronauts, animals, and different family roles. Maybe include a place for a pet where children can demonstrate care and responsibility for an animal.

Children Need a Place for Being Quiet Or For Hiding

It's nice to have a quiet place to be able to lie down and think, read a book, or just sit and be alone. A cluster of pine trees is inviting and relaxing, but a shelter can also provide shade and a relaxed feeling if it is in a corner away from noisy activities. Remember, children need shade as well as sunshine.

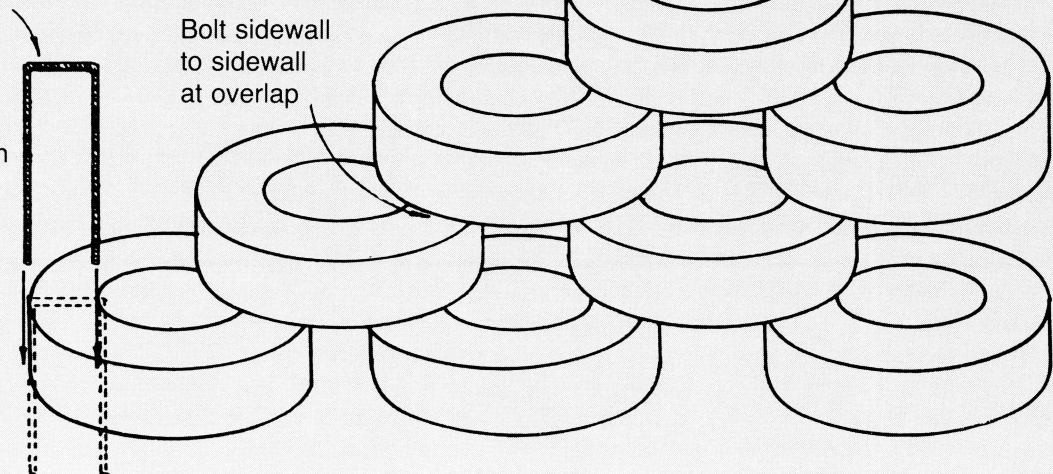
Children also like to hide. Provide them an opportunity to be sought and anticipate being found. Places can be provided that allow for some temporary safety from the seeking eyes of others.

Children enjoy materials that can be put together and taken apart. Many types of materials can be used in creating a playground for children. Some materials that can be used are: railroad ties, old tires, sand, cable spools, old boats and other things that can be obtained for little or no money. Have you thought about using—

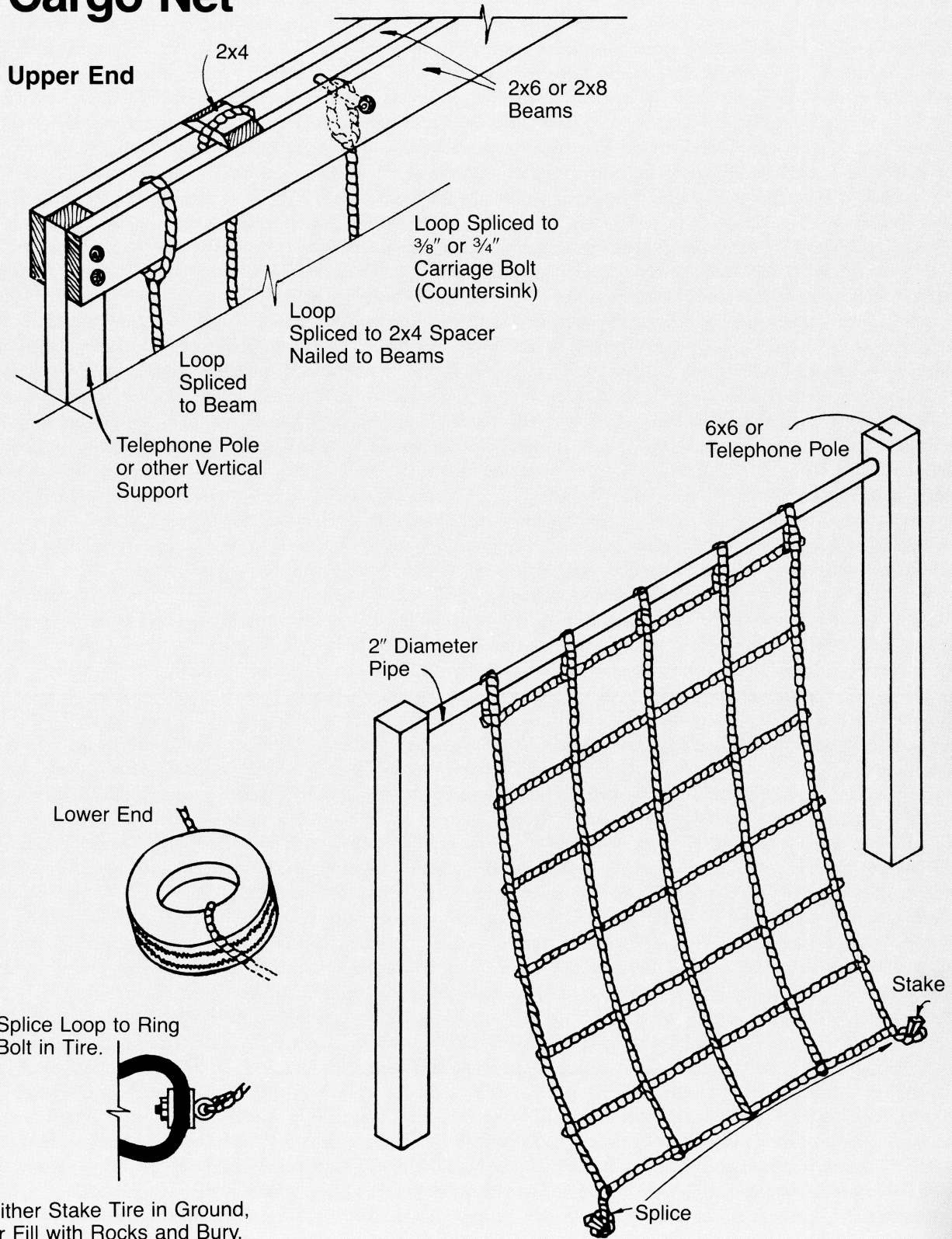
Tire Pyramid

If you use large enough tires, their weight alone will make the pyramid stable. Alternatives are to buy the bottom layer of tires, or stake the same layer with large "staples" made from steel reinforcing rod.

Be sure to make them long enough to go below frost line. (18" will do)



Cargo Net



Either Stake Tire in Ground, or Fill with Rocks and Bury.

One Method of Mounting a Cargo Net



Some Found Objects

Automobile tires, inner tubes
cable spools

sewer pipes or culverts
old rowboats
cargo nets, twisted rope
railroad ties

plastic garbage cans

The Source

garages, tire companies
telephone company

storm sewage contractors
marinas, boat yards
harbor marinas, surplus stores
salvage companies, lumber yards

hardware stores

A Way To Use It

swings, climbers, balancers
used to make other equipment such
as: slides or tables

tunnels, planters, seats
outdoor play objects
climbing nets, support cables
sand or earth retainers, stepping
blocks or outdoor seating
storage, catch-all containers

Tires—loose tires can be used to sit on, relax in, roll, jump from, crawl through, pull, stack, hide in. Other tires that are sunk in the ground can be used for climbing, balancing, as tunnels, as mazes. Tires can be used with other equipment such as boards or poles and ropes to make a balance apparatus, swings, ladders, slides, and boats.

Cable spools—can be used for buildings, castles, seesaws, or slides.

Sewer pipes or tiles—can be used for tunnels, to sit on, or as planters. You could even let children draw on them to provide a place for their own art work.

Ropes—can be used in numerous ways such as swings, for climbing or for holding other equipment. Ropes may be used with tires for swings. How about just dropping the rope with a huge knot at the bottom for standing or swinging?

Cargo nets—can make fantastic climbing equipment.

In planning playgrounds for children, keep these thoughts in mind:

- Playgrounds should meet the needs of children. They should be able to create a balance between the physical/social/emotional/cognitive development of children.
- Playgrounds should provide a process for the child to build, rebuild and reshape the playground. Children should be actively involved with the equipment and the materials on the playground. The equipment should not tell the children what to do.
- Playgrounds should involve children as designers for their own learning. Children should be able to handle the materials and experiment with them, to move equipment around and to decide what they want the playground to be.
- Playgrounds should include a diversity of materials that will challenge children; that will give them opportunities to look at materials and problems in different ways.
- Playgrounds should be supervised by trained adults so that children are encouraged, stimulated and praised as they are involved in the activities on the playground.



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■ Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914 in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Leonard C. Douglas, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Missouri and Lincoln University, Columbia, Missouri 65211. ■ An equal opportunity institution.