

## TEACHING CHILDREN TO PLAY SAFELY

*“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.” 1 Timothy 6:18*

Rough-housing play should be anticipated when children are on a playground. This behavior can lead to accidents, therefore children need to learn safe behaviors. As adults, one of our responsibilities is to help children understand that exercise and being outdoors are good for them and that safe play is necessary for fun and healthy play. Talk to children before going to the play area about the safety guidelines. Do not use statements that instill fear in a child when you are trying to change a behavior; instead, when giving guidelines use positive statements to children rather than negative ones. As an example, say, *“Hold on with both hands”* rather than *“Don’t let go”*. When children are in the play area, teachers should observe, redirect, and remind children of the following consistent guidelines.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SAFE PLAY

- *Leave bikes, backpacks, and bags away from the equipment so no one trips or falls over them.*
- *Stay away from wet equipment.*
- *Do not wear clothes with drawstrings or other strings (purses, necklaces, etc.) that can get caught on equipment.*
- *Play by the safety rules - no rough play on the equipment.*
- *Wear sunscreen when playing outside, even on cloudy days.*
- *When jumping, land with knees slightly bent and come down on both feet.*
- *Throwing sand or running with sticks is never allowed.*
- *Do not jump off platforms that are over 18 inches high.*

### SWINGS

*Instruct children to:*

- *Sit in the center of the swing; never stand or kneel.*
- *Hold with both hands.*
- *Stop the swing before getting off.*
- *Walk far away from the swing - not too close to the front or the back.*
- *Never push anyone else in the swing or allow others to push him or her.*
- *Have one person in one swing at one time.*
- *Avoid swinging empty swings and never twist swing chains.*
- *Avoid putting head and feet through exercise rings on the swing sets.*

### SLIDES

*Instruct children to:*

- *Hold on with both hands as they go up the steps of the slide, taking one step at a time; never go up the sliding surface or the frame.*
- *Keep at least one arm’s length between children.*
- *Slide down feet first, always sitting up, one at a time.*
- *Be sure no one is in front of the slide before sliding down.*
- *Be patient, avoid pushing or shoving, and wait their turn.*
- *Leave the bottom of the slide after they have taken their turn.*
- *Never use a metal slide that has been sitting in the sun.*

## CLIMBING APPARATUS

(geodesic domes or arches and jungle gyms)

*Instruct children to:*

- *Use the correct grip; use both hands.*
- *Be careful of climbing down, and watch out for those climbing up.*
- *Avoid having too many people using the apparatus at one time.*

## HORIZONTAL LADDERS AND BARS

*Instruct children to:*

- *Start at the same end of the apparatus and move in the same direction.*
- *Stay well behind the person in front and watch out for swinging feet.*
- *Avoid speed contests or trying to cover too large a distance in one move.*

## SEESAWS

*Instruct children to:*

- *Sit facing each other, not turned backwards, with only one child per seat.*
- *Keep a firm hold with both hands.*
- *Never stand or run on the board.*
- *Keep feet out from underneath the board as it descends.*

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Information compiled from National Program for Playground Safety, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, and kidshealth.org.

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