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Events ideas and play

The Playday 2009 *Make time!* campaign is asking everyone to make time for play. You are already making a difference by making time for children's play at your Playday event. To make the most of the day, think about the 'play value' of the opportunities that you are providing at your event, and also how you can highlight the *Make time!* theme. Ideas for both are in this section. For more ideas, why not post a question to other Playday event organisers via the Playday forum at www.playday.org.uk/forum.



Your event

There are lots of ways to celebrate Playday. You might plan to get together with neighbours or join with others in your area to hold a whole community event. Working with others, you could even galvanise the whole village, town or district for a larger scale celebration. Big or small, Playday is just as much about holding small scale private events as it is about grand city or town-wide events that are open to the general public.

Think about whether you want to hold one large event or a number of smaller events to reach different parts of your community. If you're holding one large event, think about how children and young people in your community will access the location. If it is in a relatively difficult location to get to, consider providing transport so everyone can attend.

If you are a local authority, consider working with your leisure department and leisure providers in your area – as well as organising a Playday celebration, could you arrange free leisure facilities for under 18s on Playday?



If you are a play provider, you may want to join with other play providers in your area to create a larger event and benefit from shared resources. Alternatively, celebrate Playday in your usual play setting, be it an adventure playground, playgroup, holiday playscheme or youth club for example. Just by doing something different and appreciating yourselves and the value of play, you'll create a day to remember.

Think about your location. Playday events have been held in parks, commons, children's centres, town centres, estates, outside local landmarks, beaches, forests, you name it! In 2007, lots of street parties were held to celebrate the Playday *Our streets too!* campaign and they were a great success. If it is impossible to close off a street to traffic, think about using pedestrianised town centre locations or large paved areas outside local venues. You could also consider holding your event on a grassed area in your neighbourhood or in your local park. Your local authority may have lists of local venues available free or discounted to community groups.

A bit of excitement

Last year, Playday organisers incorporated risk and challenge into their Playday events to celebrate the Playday *Give us a go!* campaign. Opportunities for tree climbing, rope swinging and all sorts of fun took place across the country, allowing children to take risks and learn to manage their own risks whilst playing. The Play Safety Forum, a grouping of national agencies involved in play safety, have produced guidance, *Managing risk in play provision: A position statement*,



to support the work of those involved in play provision. Play England has also published an implementation guide, based on the statement, which gives practical advice on how to balance risk against benefit in play. You can download both publications at www.playengland.org.uk/resources. For information on risk-benefit assessments, see the *Getting the details right* section of this guide.

Make time!

Ask children and young people who will be attending your event, how they would like to incorporate this year's theme on the day. If you follow their lead and take on board some of the general guidance below, you will create an environment that is child - rather than adult-led.

You could incorporate the theme into your event by inviting local people who you would like to influence to *make time* for play. By holding an event that allows children to play freely and undirected, your guests will be better equipped to understand and experience the real benefits of play, and why they should make time to support it. Why not have a pledge box and ask people how they pledge to *make time* for play.

Some people are planning to simultaneously *make time* across their event or with other local Playday events. For example by all shouting, jumping or playing the same way at the same time. This could be fun and also attract local media attention to this year's theme.

For more ideas check out the Playday website and post on the Playday forum at www.playday.org.uk/forum.

Plenty of choice

When planning what you will have on offer, think about allowing for different types of play. Make sure there are plenty of choices, both in equipment and environment to allow for children and young people of differing ages, backgrounds and abilities to play in their own way, invent games and enjoy themselves. You might want to think about providing environments for quiet play as well as noisy play, for more and less active play, for messy play and creative play, for reading and storytelling, and for playful competition.

A well organised Playday event creates an environment where children and young people can freely choose and play in their own way, with adults there in support rather than telling them how to play. *Best Play: What play provision should do for children* (available from www.playengland.org.uk/resources) describes how you can create a rich play environment and suggests things to think about when you are organising play provision.

Keeping it simple will give children and young people attending the confidence to be able to play in their neighbourhood after Playday is over. That's not to say that it isn't important to plan. Your venue can be adapted to offer opportunities for different kinds of play; the more play opportunities, the better. But beware of activities that are overly structured: the best play projects and events are those that create environments and opportunities that give

children the space and permission to enjoy the simple pleasure of playing - and this comes from them, not the organisers.

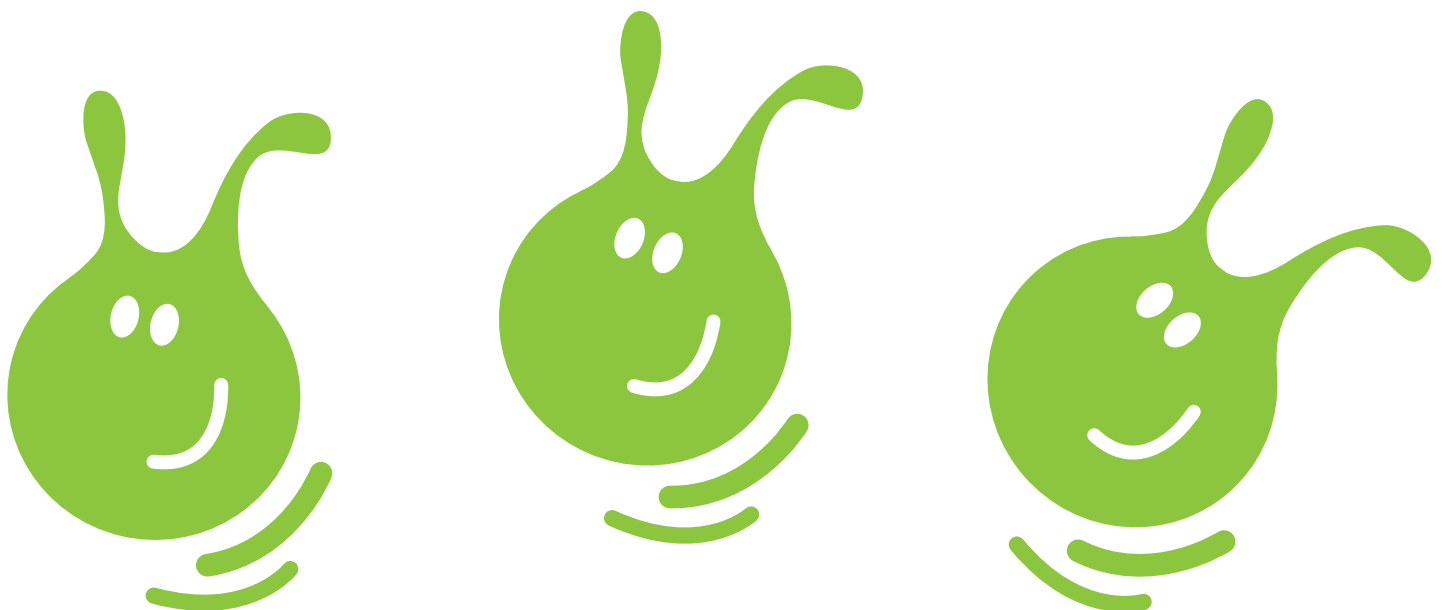
Ask children and young people for ideas and you will be sure to have a fun day for all. Develop an event that includes the whole community to demonstrate the benefits of play for everyone. The more people you approach, the more likely they will want to help organise and get involved.

More ideas and useful links will be available on the Playday website. If you have any good ideas you want to share, post them on the Playday forum at www.playday.org.uk/forum.

Play for all

Try to anticipate the differing support needs of everyone attending. Consider how accessible you can make your Playday event for disadvantaged children, young people and adults involved who may be disabled. Also:

- Work with partners who are experienced in inclusive play provision to assess needs, plan support and provide exciting play opportunities.
- Actively involve disadvantaged children and young people in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of your event.
- Be play led: ask children and young people, parents and carers, how you can ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity for play experiences.



- Don't forget that there may be disabled adults as well as children participating in your event.
- Check out physical access to different parts of the event, for example: transport; parking; priority areas; surface terrain; spaces and distances between play areas; shelters and shaded areas; access for pushchairs, wheelchairs or support frames; seating areas with spaces for wheelchair users; accessible toilets and accessible changing areas.
- Queuing systems may be challenging for some children; ask disabled and non-disabled children and young people what they would consider to be a fair priority system.

For more information and support in England, contact your regional Kids office; for their details, visit www.kids.org.uk. You may wish to refer to *All of Us Inclusion Checklist*, available from Kids. The Children's Play Information Service fact sheet *Inclusive Play*, available to download from www.ncb.org.uk/cpis, provides further information.

Plan to get together with neighbours or join with others in your area to hold a whole community event

Keep it manageable

If this is your first event – don't overstretch yourself, and try to stick to something you're familiar with. It's better to have a simple event go well, than a complex one not go to plan. If you are organising a Playday event on a street, bear in mind that setting up a public street event can be a bit more complex than preparing an enclosed venue, so allow plenty of time before and on the day for planning, setting up and clearing away. If you are organising a large scale Playday event, keep in mind that whilst entertainment can liven up an event, it's more fun if children and young people are able to join in or have a go themselves. It's also a good idea to avoid anything that results in long queues of children getting bored. Or think about a different queuing system, for example tickets or time slots, or games to play when queuing.

Make the most of the weather

Being in the summer, we hope Playday will be warm and sunny! However, make sure you've thought about what you will do if the weather is hot/cold/wet/windy – remember there are better options than just moving indoors. Children and young people like to play out in all weathers and need to experience the effects – except hypothermia or sunstroke! Be prepared with sunscreen, shades, hats, blankets, umbrellas, ponchos, gazebos, paperweights, towels, plastic sheets, and wellies: then bring on the puddle jumping or shadow casting!

Equipment

Keep any equipment and materials simple and low cost – things that children and young people can easily get hold of – so their activities can easily be continued after Playday is over. It will also minimise the impact if equipment gets lost, broken or 'borrowed'. Ask local companies or service providers for freebies that children and young people at your event can play with. Take advantage of local toy libraries or swap shops. You could also contact your local authority's recycling department for ideas.

An equipment list could include: pavement chalks, skipping ropes, hoops, balls of different sizes, scrap materials for making things, cardboard boxes, dressing up clothes, string, scissors, glue, gaffer tape, newspaper, bags, plastic cones, blankets, ground sheets, paper, sand, water, hose piping, paddling pools, as well as practical tools and safety equipment – barriers, chairs, bin bags, hats, first aid kit, water, umbrellas, wipes, refreshments and snacks, mini marquees or gazebos, bowls, towels, brushes, gloves, soap and washing up liquid.

Criteria for a rich play environment

The following criteria for a rich play environment are taken from the *Neighbourhood Play Toolkit* and adapted from those given in *Play Environments: A question of quality* (PLAYLINK, 1996) by Bob Hughes. The examples given for each section below are not the only possible options for meeting the different criteria but indicate ways in which those criteria could be met.

Criteria for a rich play environment. Adapted from those given in Play Environments: A question of quality (PLAYLINK, 119) by Bob Hughes

Criteria	Examples
A varied and interesting physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objects and equipment at different levels, spaces of different sizes, places to hide • Trees and bushes as well as artificial elements that have been made • Places to inspire mystery and imagination
Challenge in relation to the physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities which test the limits of children's capabilities and provide some rough and tumble • Sports and games, chasing
Playing with the natural elements – earth, water, fire, air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campfires, digging, playing snowballs, flying kites
Movement, eg running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beams and ropes, soft mats, bike riding, juggling equipment, ladders, space
Manipulating natural and fabricated materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials for art, cooking, making and mending of all kinds • Building dens, making concoctions, using tools, having access to bits and pieces of various kinds
Stimulation of the five senses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music-making, places where shouting is fine, quiet places • Different colours and shapes, dark and bright spaces, cooking on a campfire, rotting leaves, a range of food and drink, objects that are soft, prickly, flexible, large and small
Experiencing change in the natural and built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing the seasons through access to the outdoor environment; opportunities to take part in building, demolishing or transforming the environment
Social interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to choose whether and when to play alone or with others • Opportunities to negotiate, cooperate, compete and resolve conflicts. Being able to interact with individuals and groups of different ages, abilities, interests, genders, ethnicities and cultures
Playing with identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dressing up, role-play, performing, taking on different kinds of responsibility
Experiencing a range of emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to be powerful/powerless, scared/confident, liked/disliked, in control/out of control, brave/cowardly



Tips from Playday organisers

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Get messy! – Use shaving foam, clay, corn flour and water, eggs, slime and gunge to fill paddling pools, pits, buckets and baths.

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Get adventurous! – Construct climbing walls and obstacle course, run circus skills workshops, organise a treasure hunt and race shopping trolleys.

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Get building! – Use hay bales, tyres, shoeboxes, newspapers and junk to build dens, towers, bridges, go-karts and monsters.

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Play with the elements! – Use fire, water, earth and wind. Build a leaf or mud pit, have water fights, toast marshmallows and create a wind tunnel.

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And finally

If creating opportunities for children to have enriched play opportunities seems daunting, take comfort in the fact that play, in general, is the free time behaviour of children and young people when they are choosing what to do without direction from adults. By providing a safe and supervised environment, some basic props and listening to what children and young people would like to do, you are well on the way to a great Playday event!

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Create an environment where children and young people can freely choose and play in their own way

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