

Mounds for Play



Do you remember when you were a child – the fun you had rolling down a mound? Or maybe running down a mound with your arms wide open, feeling the breeze rush passed your face and through your outstretched fingers? These are the simple things children of today enjoy just as much as we did.

A “good playground” is not necessarily an expensive one, but one which is imaginative in its layout and where possible one that has items which can be regularly changed (eg. loose parts, unstructured and natural playspaces).

Mounds give a three dimensional aspect to an area that may be otherwise flat and a child may experience a feeling of being the king or queen of the castle and view the world from a different level. Mounds can be crawled over safely by babies, can be used to “hide” behind, for sitting or lying on, and can have a wide variety of play items added to them.

Mounds can be used for a variety of purposes and make a great addition to a playspace.

Construction

Mounds should be constructed with a maximum of 1 in 3 gradient for mowing and allow children access without slipping (or if a tractor-mounted mower is used then this gradient should be a maximum of 1 in 4). This means that for every 1 metre in height, the mound will need to be three (or four) metres in width. An extra one metre width should also be allowed on top of the mound for a flat area to allow the addition of a landing or low level platform. Therefore a one metre high mound (sufficient for the smaller child) should be seven metres in diameter. Plans for mounds are available in the *Kisafe NSW* publication *Concept Designs for Early Childhood Services*.

Added Variations

Mounds can also be used for a variety of other items to be inserted on or through the mound. These can include slides which are installed onto the mound giving added safety as a child would fall from a reduced height. This can reduce costs as the slide is less than 500mm above ground so certified undersurfacing is not required to the side of the slide. However, a 2000mm runout section fall zone filled with certified undersurfacing is required from the end of the slide. At the top and bottom of the slide *Kisafe NSW* recommends the addition of a synthetic product such as wet pour rubber, mats or synthetic grass to eliminate erosion. Timber sleepers may be used at the top of the slide for this purpose but can get slippery when damp or wet.



Using Tyres

To eliminate erosion on the sides of the mound near slides or other items, car tyres can be inserted into the mound. Stepped tyres can assist to provide access to the top of the mound. Non steel belted radials are the best to use but are difficult to obtain. If you cannot obtain these you can use the steel belted variety but these must have sufficient tread and be regularly inspected to ensure the steel belting does not protrude through cracks. If cracks do form in the tyres these should be removed and replaced with newer ones. Second hand (and free) tyres are usually available through your nearest tyre distributor.

To insert tyres into the mound construct a series of "steps". Lay the tyres beginning at the bottom of the mound and compact clay into each tyre thoroughly. The second layer is then laid over the joint below, the same way as a brick wall is bonded. The third and subsequent layers are constructed the same way, with each level overlapping the lower one to ensure they "bond" together.



Sensory Experiences

Sound and sight pipes can be installed through the mound. These are great for spying through and making all sorts of sounds! Purchase 90 mm diameter PVC stormwater drain pipe and lay these at a slight angle (for drainage) on the mound prior to completing the mound construction.

Finish laying the remainder of the soil on the mound. The pipes can be capped with PVC grates purchased at any hardware shop, to prevent creatures from nesting in the pipes. Finish with rubber tubing glued to the edge to make a soft edge for children's faces. One metre square rubber grid mats at each pipe end will minimise erosion.

Include Plants

Mounds can be landscaped with plants suitable to your area including small trees for shade, shrubs and native grasses. A list of suitable plants are available in the *Kidsafe NSW Plants for Playspaces*. These can include Banksias, Bottle Brushes, small growing Paper Barks, small Mallee Eucalypts, and Scribbly Gums are also excellent, Coast Rosemary, Wax Flowers, Native Fox Tails, and Dianella.

Other Inclusions

Other items for mounds include timber stages, shopfronts, pergolas and summer-houses, telephones, dry creek beds, boulders and fragrant gardens using aromatic plants. Bridges can be installed between a series of mounds and if kept below 500mm above ground level these do not need undersurfacing. Amphitheatres are perfect for mounds using sleepers set into the mound with the step height approximately 375mm high and the landing width approximately 600mm deep to allow for seating.

Kidsafe NSW Playground Advisory Unit have a range of publications available including:

Plants for Playspaces

Concept Designs for Schools

Concept Designs for Early Childhood Services.