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CHECKLIST · AS OF NOVEMBER 2026

Playground inspection checklist

Routine visual inspection, operational inspection and annual main inspection

One sheet per play area and round. Each inspection level includes the one before it: work down to the level you are doing. Tick each point once for the site and enter every defect in the table with the number of its equipment, so the record still says which swing.

Play area	Address or site number	Date	Inspector

Inspection ☐ Routine visual ☐ Operational ☐ Annual main

1 Routine visual inspection (daily to weekly)

The walk-round. A few minutes per site, done by the person who is there anyway.

NO.	CHECK POINT AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR	OK	Defect	N/A	REMARK OR DEFECT NO.
1.1	**Litter, glass and sharp objects** Broken glass, needles, cans and animal fouling on the surfacing and in the sand. Remove it on the spot or record it.	☐	☐	☐	
1.2	**Surfacing by eye** Loose fill kicked out under swings and at the foot of slides; holes, lifted edges or gaps in rubber surfacing; standing water.	☐	☐	☐	
1.3	**Broken or missing parts** Seats, steps, rungs, panels, handgrips and end caps: anything snapped, bent or gone since the last round.	☐	☐	☐	
1.4	**Exposed foundations** Concrete footings or anchors showing above the surfacing: a trip hazard and a hard edge where a child can land.	☐	☐	☐	
1.5	**Protruding nails, bolts and splinters** Anything a hand, an eye or a piece of clothing can catch on.	☐	☐	☐	
1.6	**Trip hazards** Roots, stumps, rocks, raised edging and anything left lying in and around the play area.	☐	☐	☐	
1.7	**Ropes and cords tied on by users** Skipping ropes, dog leads or cords tied to equipment are a strangulation hazard. Take them down.	☐	☐	☐	
1.8	**Gate, fence and sign** The gate closes by itself, the fence has no gaps, and the sign with the operator's contact and the emergency number is there and readable.	☐	☐	☐	

2 Operational inspection (every one to three months)

Everything on the routine list, plus the checks that need hands on the equipment.

NO.	CHECK POINT AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR	OK	Defect	N/A	REMARK OR DEFECT NO.
2.1	**Stability** Push and pull every post, frame and platform. Movement at the base means a loose fixing, a cracked footing or decay below ground.	☐	☐	☐	
2.2	**Chains, shackles and S-hooks** Wear at the top links and connectors, where metal runs on metal. An S-hook has to be closed: the CPSC handbook counts a gap over 0.04 in, the thickness of a dime, as open.	☐	☐	☐	
2.3	**Bearings and pivots** Swings, roundabouts, seesaws and spring rockers: noise, play, seizing, cracked springs.	☐	☐	☐	

2 Operational inspection (every one to three months)

Everything on the routine list, plus the checks that need hands on the equipment.

NO.	CHECK POINT AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR	OK	Defect	N/A	REMARK OR DEFECT NO.
2.4	**Ropes and nets** Fraying, cut strands, an exposed steel core, loose clamps.	☐	☐	☐	
2.5	**Fixings** Bolts and screws tight and complete. Note what you tightened or replaced.	☐	☐	☐	
2.6	**Timber, metal and plastic** Cracks and soft spots in timber, flaking rust on steel, brittle or cracked plastic, glass fibres showing on slides made of glass-reinforced plastic.	☐	☐	☐	
2.7	**Crush and shear points** Moving parts that can pinch or crush a finger: seesaw pivots, the edge of a roundabout, the joints of a suspension bridge.	☐	☐	☐	
2.8	**Loose-fill depth** Measure at the worn spots, not at the edge, and record the lowest reading. The CPSC handbook (July 2025) says never to keep less than 9 in of wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel (12 in when first filled), or 6 in of rubber mulch.	☐	☐	☐	
2.9	**Guardrails and barriers** Present and firm on every platform, with no panel or rail missing.	☐	☐	☐	

3 Annual main inspection (once a year)

Done by a competent inspector. The list shows what the report should cover, so you can brief the inspector and read the result. It does not replace the inspector.

NO.	CHECK POINT AND WHAT TO LOOK FOR	OK	Defect	N/A	REMARK OR DEFECT NO.
3.1	**Foundations and anchoring** Footings dug out where needed: cracks, corrosion at the post shoe, posts decayed at ground level.	☐	☐	☐	
3.2	**Rot and corrosion in load-bearing parts** Timber probed or drilled where decay is suspected; steel checked for loss of section, not just surface rust.	☐	☐	☐	
3.3	**Entrapment, with probes** Head, neck, finger and clothing traps tested with the standard's probes, not judged by eye. The CPSC checklist flags openings between 3.5 and 9 in.	☐	☐	☐	
3.4	**Impact area and surfacing** The free height of fall against the surfacing's rated critical fall height, the extent of the impact area, and obstacles inside it.	☐	☐	☐	
3.5	**One-post equipment** Items standing on a single post get their own check of the post below ground.	☐	☐	☐	
3.6	**Repairs and changes since the last main inspection** Whether replaced parts and modifications have changed the safety of the equipment.	☐	☐	☐	
3.7	**Extent of the surfacing** Protective surfacing that reaches far enough beyond the equipment. The CPSC checklist asks for at least 6 ft in all directions, and more in front of and behind swings.	☐	☐	☐	

Defects and actions

One line per defect, closed when the last column is filled in. Risk on the scale you use, for example low, medium, high.

No.	Equipment (ID)	Component and defect	Risk	Action required	Due	Done (date, by)

No.	Equipment (ID)	Component and defect	Risk	Action required	Due	Done (date, by)

Result ☐ No defects ☐ Defects found, all equipment stays open
☐ Equipment restricted or closed: see the defects table

Date _____ Inspector _____ Signature _____

Playground inspection levels: who checks what, and how often

INSPECTION	HOW OFTEN	WHO	WHAT IT FINDS
Routine visual inspection	Daily to weekly, by how heavily the site is used	Someone briefed for it: caretaker, groundskeeper, site staff	Obvious hazards from vandalism, use or weather: broken parts, glass, displaced surfacing
Operational inspection	Every one to three months, or as the manufacturer states	A person trained for it	Wear and stability: chains, bearings, fixings, how the moving parts work
Annual main inspection	Once a year	A competent inspector, in many places independent of the operator	The overall safety of equipment, foundations and surfacing, including rot and corrosion
Post-installation inspection	Before a new or altered play area opens	A competent inspector	Whether equipment and surfacing were installed as the standard and the manufacturer require

The levels are those of EN 1176-7:2020; the frequencies are how operators in Europe and the UK commonly apply them. The standard fixes no interval for the routine visual inspection. In the United States the CPSC handbook sets no fixed interval: follow the manufacturer's schedule and inspect busy playgrounds more often. US practice often calls the quick custodial round a high-frequency inspection and the hands-on one a low-frequency inspection. Local rules and the manufacturer's instructions can ask for more.

Standards and editions this sheet draws on

EN 1176-7:2020	Playground equipment and surfacing, Part 7: guidance on installation, inspection, maintenance and operation. The inspection levels of this sheet. In the UK the standard is applied as guidance.
CPSC Public Playground Safety Handbook, Publication 325, July 2025	United States. Sets no fixed inspection interval. An S-hook counts as closed with no gap over 0.04 in. For loose fill it gives 12 in when installed and never less than 9 in once compressed (rubber mulch: 8 in and 6 in).
CPSC Public Playground Safety Checklist	The short public list on cpsc.gov: 12 in of loose fill, surfacing 6 ft beyond the equipment, openings between 3.5 and 9 in.
ASTM F1487-25	United States. The performance specification for playground equipment for public use. Named for reference; no figure on this sheet is taken from it.
RoSPA Play Safety	United Kingdom. Published advice on routine, operational and annual inspections.

The points are drawn from EN 1176-7, the CPSC Public Playground Safety Handbook (July 2025) and the published advice of RoSPA and the public checklist of the CPSC. A checklist does not make an inspection conform to a standard and does not qualify the person using it.

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The same checklist runs as a form on the map in Geocadra, with a record and photos for every piece of equipment:

www.geocadra.com/en/templates/playground-inspection-checklist