

2 Event ideas and play

The most important thing to remember about Playday is that it's a celebration of children's right to play. Your event can be a great way to get a lot of attention that children's right to play should be protected, but it's also essential that the day is a great opportunity for children and young people to get out and play freely. To do this best, ask children and young people how they want to celebrate!



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 the *Our place* campaign message, and the best way to celebrate in your community.

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. You might consider holding one larger event on Playday, and smaller ones in the week or month around it.

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

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



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 extra special on Playday and appreciating yourselves and the value of play, you'll be celebrating children's right to play and creating 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! This year, to highlight the *Our place* campaign, you might consider holding your event in a prominent public space, or an under used space in your community that could be transformed into a space to play on Playday and beyond. In 2007, lots of street parties were held to celebrate the Playday *Our streets too!* campaign and they were a great success. Whether you live in a small rural or sprawling urban community, you could repeat the success and spirit of the 2007 street parties. 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.

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 or other public space, bear in mind that setting up a public 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.

Our place

By holding a Playday event in your local community, you are already highlighting this year's *Our place* campaign by getting everyone out to play.

Ask children and young people who will be attending your event, how they would like to incorporate this year's theme on the day. Follow their lead and you will create an environment that is child-led rather than adult-led and much more beneficial for children to play. Of course, it's ok to come up with some ideas to get them started.

Think about and find out how children like to play in your community and how they would like

to play more if they could. Make sure this can happen at your event and use the occasion as a way of getting your whole community onboard, including decision makers. By demonstrating the positive results of children playing happily where you live, you will make a strong case for children to be able to play there all year round, not just on Playday.

How about creating imaginative areas to play at your event that represent elements of different communities? Bales of straw in your 'farmers field', lots of sand at your 'beach', water and fire play at your 'fire station', and you could provide loose parts to play with at your 'local garage'. If you're running a consultation at your event, you could even hold it in your 'town hall'.

One of the aims of the *Our place* campaign is to encourage opportunities for communities to get to know each other across the generations. To make this happen, you could invite children

What's play?

Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests, in their own way and for their own reasons.

and young people to bring their whole families to your event, and encourage people to share their play experiences. If you want to attract some media attention, why not organise something that everyone can get involved in, such as a skipping session for 0-100 year-olds? Quirky ideas can bring you welcome attention, but do ensure you also provide opportunities for children to choose how they want to play. For information about contacting your local media and further media guidance, refer to the *Getting publicity* section of this guide.

The section below gives guidance on how you can best provide an event that caters for children to play freely. For more ideas check out the Playday website and post your questions on the Playday forum at www.playday.org.uk/forum.

Plenty of choice

To make the most of the day, think about the 'play value' of the opportunities that you are providing at your event.

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 community after Playday is over. 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.

In line with this year's campaign, 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.

A bit of excitement

Playday event organisers are great at incorporating risk and challenge into their Playday events.

Opportunities for tree climbing, rope swinging and all sorts of fun take place across the country each year, allowing children to challenge themselves 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.

Play for all

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

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!

Tips from Playday organisers

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Get messy! Use shaving foam, clay, cornflour 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 straw 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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Create an environment where children and young people can freely choose and play in their own way

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Materials and resources

Keep any materials and resources 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’.

You could use: yogurt pots to make towers in sand; water, plastic sheeting and washing up liquid for water slides; cornflour and water to make gloop; cooked spaghetti and paint for some messy play; mini treats for treasure hunts; old pillows for pillow fights; straw bales for seating and playing; rolls of wallpaper for giant arts and crafts; old clothes and curtains for dressing up; flour, salt and water for play dough; flint and cotton wool for fire building; and cardboard boxes and spray paint to create graffiti walls and cardboard cities!

Ask local companies, such as your local supermarket or DIY store, and service providers for freebies. Take advantage of local toy libraries, swap shops and scrap stores. You could also contact your local authority’s recycling department.

If you’re a playworker you’ve probably got a kit of resources that you use every day. If you’re from a non-play background, make sure you involve local playworkers in your planning. We’ve started a thread on the Playday forum www.playday.org.uk/forum ‘What do you need in a good play kit?’ – take a look for inspiration and post your ideas if there are any gaps.

And finally

If creating enriched play opportunities for children 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!

Criteria for a rich play environment

The following criteria for a rich play environment are 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	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, confident/scared, liked/disliked, in control/out of control, brave/cowardly