

# Design

You are now ready to take what you have learned from the members of the community you are working for and turn it into an inclusive playground. There are some things you should keep in mind when you sit down to design.

## Zoning and Routing

Zoning and routing- create zones and routes within the design that are logical and straight forward.

Once you have a site plan and a concept that is inclusive, it is time to create play zones and routes within your playground. These zones and routes should be logically placed so that everyone, regardless of physical or mental ability, will be able to navigate the playground.

Remember what we learned earlier about designing for “intersections” – create routes that facilitate interactions between children of all abilities.

Having said this, there is often a randomness about children playing, and taking the long route can sometimes be more fun if it passes through a tunnel or over a hill.

When creating zones and routes, think back to the listening portion of the Five Step Manual and the things you learned while talking to local students, parents and teachers. What types of play did you find the community is looking for and how are they related?

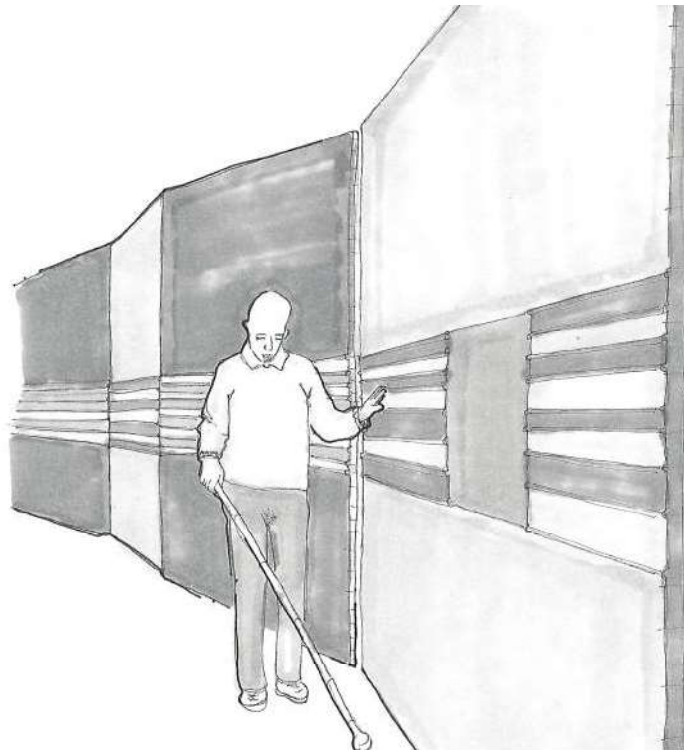
These zones should overlap to create a more inclusive feel. Do not split the site up into the different levels of ability.

This will create a playground where children of different abilities are separated from each other.



Overlapping zones and different levels of ability on every feature within the playground will lead to a more inclusive playground that encourages intersections.

Once you have zones picked and roughly placed on the site (they will move and shift), it is time to create paths or routes through the site. Routes should be at once fun interesting spaces for play and a way for caretakers to move to a child in need. Creative problem solving is needed to make these spaces both fun for play and efficient for emergencies. Using textures, grade changes and width changes can lead to interesting routes as long as views and movement of caretakers are taken into account.



Be logical when creating routes through different zones. The simpler the routes through the site the easier it will be for children to find their way and for caretakers to intervene in case of emergency.

Consider colors and textures when designing paths. A child with limited sight should be able to tell when they have left the path and are in a zone of the playground. This can also be a fun place for design and should add to and strengthen your concept.

Paths should also be wide enough for a child or caretaker in a wheelchair to comfortably get from place to place. A good dimension to start with is 1.5 m. These paths should also be as level as possible to make traveling them easier. As it is a playground, you can create reasonable levels of challenge and fun in the design, access.



Get creative with how children interact with the site and each other within the zones you have set up. A speaking tube can allow climbing activities on a slope, possibly changing over the length of the slope, can of ability to climb a slope together.



It is not that each student needs to touch the same exact spot but being close enough to each other to interact audibly and visually is very important to creating an inclusive abilities to interact with one another.



The Zones and Routes can appear on a map at the entrance of the playground. This map should be easy to read and easy for caretakers to relay to children who can not read it. The planning you have done so far will make creating this map easier.

## Feedback

Be sure to bring your designs back to the community you are designing for to get their input. Ask them if the design is working and if there are problems they can for see with what you have produced.

## Repeat

Design is an iterative process. You have to work through a few versions of the same playground to get to one that everyone enjoys. By repeating the steps above you will refine each aspect of the design and discover what the children and caretakers in the community like best about your design. You will also learn what to avoid in future iterations. There is no perfect design and remember that you can always renovate and add to the space over time.

## Conclusion

Throughout this manual we have been discussing the importance of rethinking what it means to design a playground and looking at it through the lens of inclusion. We imparted several strategies that are employed by professionals in the field when they design inclusive playgrounds and laid out a process for you to follow. By combining this manual with the Playground Ideas' Five Step Manual you are now ready to design, fund, and build a playground that every child in your community can enjoy.



"Things are not always going to be easy for you, the students or the parents. The best way you can handle a situation is to be supportive. Come to the table with a solutions-based approach and a positive attitude." -Rick Hansen Foundation