

Step 2 - Plan

If the community has decided to move ahead with building a playground, it's time to get organized! In this chapter, we'll cover how to create a plan for the logistics of your build. Consider organizing a team of parents, teachers, and community volunteers to spearhead the planning process together. Not only will it divide the workload, but involving multiple stakeholders throughout the playground process will create more ownership of the project in the long run.

As you think about how to make your project happen, your mind is probably swimming with questions! In the next several pages, we'll work through the following topics and provide some tips and tricks for successful playground planning:

- + What is a "Project Page" and how do I set it up?
- + What materials will we need?
- + What tools will we need?
- + Who will build the playground?
- + How do we create a budget for our playground?
- + How will we raise the money for our playground?
- + How long does it take to build a playground?
- + What do we need to do to prepare for the build?

Ready to dive in? Let's get started!

Your playground “Project Page”

Your first step in the planning process is setting up your Playground Ideas “Project Page.” Your “Project Page” is like your very own website for your playground project where you can save your favorite designs, fundraise and receive donations (100% fee-free), update donors, connect with other playground builders in your region, and share your work with the world. You can explore other playground projects around the world on our “Community Built Projects” page: www.playgroundideas.org/all-projects.

Setting up your page:

1. If you have not already done so, create an account at playgroundideas.org.
2. Once you’re logged into your account dashboard click “Start a Project Page”
3. Enter in your project details and you’re ready to go!

Fundraising on your project page:

During the sign-up process, you’ll be asked “Do you want to receive crowdfunded donations for this project?” If you check “Yes” this will allow people to donate to your project directly on your page. In the “Fundraising” section of this chapter we’ll go into further detail about how to successfully run a crowdfunding campaign.

After you submit your project page, you’ll be asked to enter your PayPal details in order to receive donations. Rest assured that we won’t charge anything to your PayPal account. Ever. (We mean it when we say all our resources are free!) You need to add your PayPal account info so that PayPal knows where to send the money when someone makes a donation. Playground Ideas does not have access to your secure PayPal account. All online transactions require the use of a credit card processor. We use PayPal to ensure any online donations are protected. PayPal charges a processing cost of 30 cents + 1.9% to 2.9% fee, depending on your country. This cost is added on top of a donation so that you receive the entire amount donated to you. So if your Aunt Dorothy donates \$10 to your project, she’ll be charged about \$10.49 (depending on what country she lives in) and you will receive the full \$10.

Finding volunteers on your project page:

During the sign-up process you’ll also be asked, “Do you need volunteers for this project?” If you check “Yes” this will allow your project and contact information to appear when visitors to the site search for volunteer opportunities. Please note that Playground Ideas does not vet volunteers and we advise you to do your own careful screening of potential volunteers. Remember, if you have any problems or questions along the way we’re happy to help! Send us an email at info@playgroundideas.org.

Materials

Playground Ideas strongly advocates that communities build playgrounds with materials they can easily find locally. Why?

- + Sustainability - Playgrounds get a daily beating from the children who play on them, so even the strongest, most expensive playground requires maintenance over time. Playgrounds should be built robustly, but should be thought of as a living structure - one that needs care and upkeep. When playgrounds are built from common local materials, when something breaks it can be easily and quickly repaired. This is essential to keeping the playground safe and fun for years to come!
- + Cost - Buying locally is typically cheaper than importing materials or playground equipment. Playgrounds are bulky and heavy and the costs of shipping playgrounds (new or second hand) can be many times the cost of a locally built playground. Why not save the money and repair and improve the playground over time? Also, finding replacement parts from overseas can be a real hassle.
- + Ethics - Buying and building local supports the local economy!

You won't know exactly what materials you'll need until you select your designs and create a site plan, but getting a good idea of what resources you have available will help to guide your design process. In each playground element "Design Plan" (playgroundideas.org/designs) you'll find a list of necessary materials. The materials you can use to build a playground are nearly unlimited. Some of the materials that have been used on community built playgrounds include:

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|---|----------------------------|
| + Used car, truck, tractor, and motorbike tires | + Soil |
| + Timber – cut planks, whole trunks and strong branches | + Sand |
| + Steel | + Plants / trees / flowers |
| + Used 44 gallon drums | + Ceramic tiles |
| + Paint | + Bamboo |
| + Cement | + Thatch |
| + Large stones, boulders, small pebbles | + Chain |
| + Bricks | + Rope |
| + Corrugated iron | + Earthbags |

In Chapter 4: Build, we'll go into more detail on specific materials and what to look for when sourcing them. As you're starting your plan, walk through local markets and shops to get an idea of what you can purchase locally. Ask local builders about what's available. Ask around for what kind of recycled or leftover materials you can use. Think about natural, recycled, and industrial waste resources. Put all this together into a list of possible materials.

Creative recycling

When we begin a playground build, one of the first questions we ask is, "What kind of interesting junk do you have?" We love using recycled materials on our playgrounds - they're free and often result in some of the most creative designs. Mobilize your team to be on the look-out for anything you could use on your playground build! These are just a few of the ways we've seen recycled materials creatively used in playground builds:



This cracked water tank in Uganda was transformed into a play hut by cutting a door and windows and adding a thatched roof.



Old steering wheels make this play bus come to life in Papua New Guinea.



A local medical clinic in Kenya donated their broken equipment to be used in this play clinic.

Choosing materials

Appropriate materials will vary from location to location and should only be selected with the advice of local builders. Ask about what materials are strong, long-lasting, safe, and available locally. Find out the local names of specific materials, like the names for the strongest rot and termite resistant hardwood. Inquire about potential hazards such as termites, weather, and flooding and what affect they may have on materials. Look around the community at structures which are falling apart and ask, why? Was the wood eaten by termites? Did the metal rust from the weather? Pay attention to what is and is not commonly used and ask critical questions.

Building with tires

One of the most common materials used on community-built playgrounds is used car tires. Why?

- + Availability - Tires are found in nearly every community in the world. We've been hard pressed to find a location that isn't able to scrounge up at least a couple dozen used tires. (And we've been to some really, really remote places.)
- + Easy to build with - Building with car tires doesn't take any special skills. If you've got a few tires, an electric drill, a knife, a handful of bolts, and a shovel, there are a nearly unlimited number possibilities of designs you can build.
- + Safety - The majority of playgrounds around the world are built from steel, which can pose safety hazards. Steel elements in direct sunlight can get extremely hot and even burn children. Steel is also very hard and can hurt kids if they slip and fall. Tires, on the other hand, do not get nearly as hot in sunlight and are forgiving if you fall down and bonk your head on them.
- + Durability - Tires are made to hurl thousands of pounds of machinery down bumpy roads. They're made to last. And they do. They're also not susceptible to common risks - like termites eating wood or weather rusting metal.
- + Affordability - Most communities can source tires for free or very cheap. We've worked in some places where used tires are such a waste problem that they are often burned to dispose of them, releasing toxic fumes. In these areas, people are happy for you to take their used tires off their hands! In other areas of the world, old tires are used to make sandals, or other products, so they have a "value" in the local economy. In areas like this, we've sometimes had to pay a small price for tires and have factored this into the budget.

Finding tires

Finding enough tires for a project can be tricky, so start early. Over the years, we've collected thousands of tires for playgrounds, so we've learned a thing or two along the way! The most effective thing you can do? Get comfortable asking.

You'll need to ask a lot of people for their tires - some will say yes and some will say no, but you'll never know until you ask!

Prepare your "tire donation pitch" beforehand. Put together a pack of photos of tire playgrounds, information about your project, and your contact details. You can even include a link to your playground "Project Page." Ask to set up an appointment with the owner, manager, or someone in the office. Be friendly, confident, and clearly explain what you need the tires for. Most people feel nervous speaking to someone in charge and asking for help. In reality, people are often very happy to contribute to a project that benefits children in their community! If the person you speak to needs to get approval from someone higher up, remember to get their phone number and follow up.

There are many places you can look for used tires:

- + Try visiting local mechanics, petrol stations, and garages. We've had luck arranging a schedule with some shops (like agreeing to come every few weeks to pick up tires).
- + Ask parents, teachers, and community members if they know any owners of garages-often a personal connection helps.
- + Get a truck and drive around the industrial areas of your community. Stop and ask anywhere you see a pile of tires!
- + In larger cities, ask around for where the "tire yards" are. There are often industrial yards in cities where tires are stockpiled to be retread, recycled or sold.
- + Post on community facebook groups or online forums.
- + Put up flyers at cafes, guest houses, and public spaces.
- + Get your story on the local radio or in the newspaper.
- + Make a list of any large organizations, government offices, or companies near you that may have a fleet of cars, trucks, or machinery. Particularly in countries where roads are commonly unpaved, these types of groups go through many, many tires. Make an appointment to speak to someone in the office and make your pitch! We've had luck with: military bases, internet companies, infrastructure/road paving companies, government ministries, and NGOs.

Selecting tires

When you're collecting tires, be sure to get a variety of car, truck, tractor, and a few motorbike tires. The type of tires necessary will vary depending on the designs you choose, but as a general rule, truck tires are preferable because of their durability and strength so collect these whenever possible. When collecting tires, check to ensure that they don't have steel wires exposed. Tires with a puncture or small patch of exposed wires can be used if they are half buried in the ground.

However, if the tire has exposed wires on half or more of its surface, it will not be safe to use. You'll find more advice on tire safety, building with tires, and how to tell the difference between types of tires in Chapter 4: Build.

Sourcing materials

Most community-built playgrounds include a mixture of purchased, donated, and recycled materials. Rely on local builders who have experience purchasing particular materials to advise you on who to buy from and what to look for (it also never hurts to get a second quote from someone else to compare from time to time). We've also included tips on selecting and building with specific materials in Chapter 4: Build. As you are getting ready to purchase materials, refer to this information as well as local advice.

Create a list of materials you are looking for and distribute it to parents and community members. Many people may be able to donate by offering old tires, plants from their garden, or leftover bricks, concrete, or paint from a recent construction project. Doing this early in the planning process will give people time to organize what they can offer. If you are able, consider setting aside a secure space at your school or community center to begin stockpiling supplies.

Tools

The tools you need for your playground will depend on the designs you build. In each element "Design Plan" (playgroundideas.org/designs), you'll see an overview of the tools required.

As you're putting together your playground plan, make a list of all the tools and transport (trucks, earth moving machinery, etc.) you can access through community networks. Local businesses, vocational schools, factories, workshops, and artisans will all have tools you may be able to borrow or rent for the project.

Tools to consider:

Hand tools

- + Utility knives and plenty of new blades. (Utility knives are a necessary tool if you're building with tires!)
- + Wrench / ratchet spanner set
- + Hammers
- + Chisels
- + Machete
- + Screwdrivers

- + Bolt cutters
- + Hand saw
- + Pliers
- + Shovel / hoe / pick-axe

Power tools

- + Electric grinder / metal cutter
- + Electric drill
- + Electric circular saw
- + Welding equipment
- + Chainsaw

Note: if your access to power tools is limited, the most important electric tools to find are an electric grinder and an electric drill. If you have access to these two tools, you can build nearly any used tire element.

Other

- + Gloves
- + Measuring tools
- + Paintbrushes
- + Trucks and other transport
- + Earth moving equipment
- + Generators (if power is unreliable)
- + Extension cords

Skills & labor

You may be wondering, “How will I build the playground? I’ve never built anything before!” You do not need to worry about having the technical skills to build a playground yourself. Why? Because in every community on earth you’ll find people who build things - homes, buildings, roads, furniture. The world is filled with tremendously talented and skilled people.

No matter where in the world you live, local craftsmen and women will have the necessary technical skills to build a space for children to play. Playground Ideas' designs (playgroundideas.org/designs) are made to be built using skills that are commonly found in communities around the world.

For the sustainability and maintenance of the project, it is vitally important that local builders are engaged in the project. If you are building at an existing school or community center ask the principal or director about who they trust to do routine repairs on the buildings or grounds. Engaging builders who are already connected with the school or organization will make maintenance easier in the long-run as staff will know who to call to make repairs when something breaks. Being that they already have a relationship with the school or organization, they're also more likely not to overcharge and to be accountable to doing good work. For most designs (particularly used tire designs), anyone who is comfortable working with their hands, using basic tools, following directions, and lifting heavy materials should suffice, even if they are not technically trained.

Skilled labor

+ For more complex designs, you may need to find people with specialized skills. Consider:

- + Carpenters - for building wood cubby houses, platforms, or structures.
- + Welders - for constructing any metal playground equipment.
- + Masons/tile layers - if you are building any of the cement and tile slides (a popular element!) find someone who is precise at laying tile and has experience working with cement.
- + Artists - for painting murals and playground elements.

Volunteers

In addition to skilled craftsmen and women, you'll also need to find lots of general laborers. You'll need people to dig holes, wash tires, paint, shovel sand, etc. This is a great area to utilize volunteers! There are lots of ways you can find volunteers:

- + Indicate that you want volunteers on your "Project Page." When setting up your page, you'll be asked "Do you need volunteers for this project?" If you check yes, this will allow interested volunteers who visit our site to find your page.
- + Join our private facebook group for playground builders (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/playgroundideascommunitybuilders/>) and let the group know your location, dates, and that you're looking for volunteers. This group is made up of playground builders around the world who may be interested in joining you!

- + Talk to local schools and volunteer groups (Rotary clubs, High School classes, youth groups).
- + Ask local companies to contribute by letting their employees volunteer on your project for a day.
- + Ask parents to lend a hand.
- + Post on community facebook groups or online forums.
- + Put up flyers at cafes, guest houses, and public spaces.
- + Get your story on the local radio or in the newspaper.

Project Leader

In addition to skilled craftsmen/women and general laborers, it's a good idea to have a "Project Leader" as a part of the build who is familiar with playgrounds and the design of the site. This is especially important if you are building in an area of the world where playgrounds are not common. While local builders may have the technical skills to execute a design, many adults around the world didn't grow up playing on a playground and may be unfamiliar with the elements they are asked to build. If no one on the build really understands the aim of the design and the use of each element, this can lead to misunderstandings. Qualities of a good "Project Leader" include:

- + They should be familiar with playgrounds, children's play and how the space will likely be used.
- + They need to have a good understanding of the overall design of the playground as well as the purpose of each element.
- + They must have patience, good communication skills, and have the ability to encourage, lead, and motivate a team.



+ They must have good listening skills (this is vitally important!) It is not the “Project Leader’s” job to know everything. They will need to rely on the advice of the local builders and skilled craftsmen/women in regards to building styles and material selection. Therefore, they must be able to listen well and adapt the plan according to the advice and best judgement of those they are working with.

+ Building skills are helpful, but not necessarily. More important is their understanding of the design and their communication and listening skills.

Learning from our mistakes:

Once on a playground build in East Africa, we asked a local builder we were working with to construct a “play house.” We specified that the house just needed be 4ft x 4ft, and asked that he pick the style and materials based on his best judgement of what would be appropriate and cost-effective. Over his career, this builder had constructed many houses in his community so this was a very simple job that he was more than qualified to do. We went away for the day and came back to realize we had forgotten to communicate a very important piece of information: while we had told the builder how wide and long the house should be, we had forgotten to tell him how high it should be. Because the builder had never seen a playground “play house” before, he constructed a house that was 4ft long and 4ft wide, but as tall as a normal house. What resulted was strong and solidly built, but it looked and felt more like an adult’s tool shed than a child’s playhouse. It lacked that cozy child-size design that inspires pretend play and makes the child feel a grown-up in their own-sized world. Playgrounds are strange constructions, so these kinds of misunderstandings happen all the time on playground builds. Often builders need extra support in understanding why an element is designed the way it is or how children will use it. Having a “Project Leader” on-site will help to ensure that the design is implemented appropriately.

Budgeting

How much will your playground cost? It’s up to you! We’ve seen community playgrounds built for \$100 to \$20,000+! How much your playground costs will greatly depend on the designs you select, materials you choose, the size of your site, and the cost of materials and labor in your location. The most common goal for playgrounds on our website is between \$US5,000 - \$10,000 but many have been built for much less than this. Once you’ve selected your designs and laid out your site plan, use the “Design Plans” (playgroundideas.org/designs) to create a list of the materials you need. You can then work with local builders to price out your materials and labor and create a budget for your project.

To give you a good idea of potential costs, we’ve provided a couple example budgets and price lists for real playgrounds in the Appendix, pg. 71. Use these samples as templates to do your own research into prices in your location.

Fundraising

Getting funding for a project can seem like a daunting task if you have no experience in fundraising. Don't let that stop you! Thousands of people before you have had success raising the funds they needed for their playground and with a good fundraising strategy you can too!

Crowdfunding

Crowd...what? "Crowdfunding" is a term that refers to the practice of funding a project by raising contributions from a large number of people online. Sites like Kickstarter, GoFundMe, and Indiegogo have popularized this idea. Crowdfunding is a great way to utilize your online social networks to help fund your project. Playground Ideas offers users a free platform where anyone can set up a page for their playground project, receive donations, and update donors along the way. On page 17 of this chapter we covered how to set up your page. Crowdfunding is a great tool, but you'll have to put in some work to make your crowdfunding campaign a success! Here's a few tips:

- + Remember, donors are not looking for you. Don't expect to just start a page, sit back, and let the donations roll in. YOU have got to get the word out about your project, so make a communication strategy before you start.
- + Add a video. Crowdfunding projects that include videos are proven to be more effective! Your video can be as simple as you sitting in front of your computer telling potential donors about your project and showing a few photos of the site.
- + Optimize your project page. Make a good first impression with your page. Add project details, plenty of photos, and make sure your writing is clear, concise, and compelling.
- + Communicate your timeline and plan for the project - What have you done so far? When do you plan to build?
- + Build trust. Consider adding a breakdown of your budget to let donors know exactly how you'll be using their money.
- + Tell a good story. Good stories drive action. What is your playground story? What has motivated you to do this project? What would a playground mean for this community? Engage people's hearts and emotions in your project.
- + Add rewards. Consider incentivizing donations by offering prizes for different contribution levels. For example, "if you donate \$50 we'll mail you a picture of the playground drawn by one of the kids at the school" or "if you donate \$100 your name will be painted on the playground sign."
- + Utilize social media. The people most likely to donate to your project are your friends and family. After that, friends of friends. Utilizing your social media networks is a great way to reach these people. Post regularly about your project and ask them to share as well!

+ Share your victories and thank your donors along the way. Keep the momentum going with social media posts like:

"Wow, we've reached over 50% of our fundraising goal in just one week! Let's keep going and give these kids the playground of their dreams!"

"We're only \$100 away from reaching our fundraising goal! Will you share our page to help us get there?"

+ Email family and friends. Send out a few emails throughout your campaign updating your networks about your project and asking them to get involved by donating and sharing on social media.

+ Update your donors. Don't forget your donors when you reach your goal! Show your gratitude for their contribution by continuing to update your page and sharing photos of what their money made possible.

Let us know if you are running a crowdfunding campaign for your playground. Send us an email at info@playgroundideas.org. We'd love to give you feedback, cheer you on along the way, and share your page to help you drum up donations!

More fundraising ideas

Crowdfunding certainly isn't the only way to fundraise. There are more ways to fundraise than we can count. Here's just a handful of the creative ideas we've seen in our community:

+ On Donna's playground in Azerbaijan, she got local businesses to sponsor different playground elements and then painted the business name on each element as a thank you.

+ On Julie's playground in Thailand, the parents of different classes each got together to raise the funds for a different element on the playground.

+ Tom and Carla host university student volunteers on their playground builds in Uganda. Before their trip, each volunteer is required to fundraise a portion of the costs of the playground build.

+ Josh and Jane, two Peace Corps Volunteers, got a grant for their playground in Morocco from World Connect (www.worldconnect-us.org).

+ Rabi got funding for her playground from the federal government of Nigeria by writing a detailed proposal on the advantages of early childhood play.

+ In Timor-Leste, we worked on a playground project that was sponsored by a Rotary Club (www.rotary.org). There are Rotary clubs all over the world - consider reaching out to your local chapter!

- + Patrick raised funds for his playground project in India by getting a brewery in his town to brew a special indian pale ale beer which he sold at local bars.
- + When Bret and Kristin got married, they asked their guests to donate to their playground project in Mexico instead of giving gifts.

Preventing dependency

If you are not local to the community in which you are planning to build a playground, it is important to think critically about how you fundraise. Even though you may be capable of raising all the necessary funds from your outside networks, this isn't necessarily a good idea. By providing 100% of the resources needed, you risk creating an attitude of dependency on outside sources instead of relying on local resources. Furthermore, if the local community has not contributed to the playground they may not feel ownership over the project and may be less likely to support the build or maintain the playground into the future. We've seen many donated playgrounds around the world fall to ruins simply because no one felt any real ownership over protecting and maintaining it. This is just human nature - we're all more likely to take care of something we've worked hard for than something that we've gotten for free.

There are different approaches you can take to try and prevent this:

- + Fully engage the local community in every step of the process - planning, fundraising, designing, building and creating a strategy for maintenance.
- + Divide fundraising goals between yourself and the local community. Perhaps decide together on an amount they can reasonably fundraise and agree that if they can come up with this amount you'll fundraise the rest.
- + In return for your fundraising efforts, request that the local community organize the donation of certain materials or labor for the build (like tires).
- + Ask that the local community provide meals or housing for volunteers and builders during the build.

We often think of fundraising as a burden, but it is an opportunity for community building as well. Paul Hogan, a playground builder who has built playgrounds around the world, had a "chicken dinner" policy. If the community couldn't organize a chicken dinner fundraiser (or bake sale, benefit concert, etc.), then the community didn't have enough enthusiasm to get the project done.

Children & playground building

If you are building at a site where children will be present, like a school, it is important that you create a good plan with the teachers and staff for how children will interact with the space during the build. It can be very dangerous for children to be playing on and around an unfinished playground. Children will naturally be very excited and curious about what is happening to their space, so if you do not set clear rules and expectations from the start you are likely to get very frustrated with little hands touching paint before it dries or stomping on concrete before it sets! We've seen many school uniforms ruined with paint when these expectations weren't clearly communicated. Keep in mind that the build in a small school may take over an entire school yard which means that children may have no place to play during the build. This can be stressful for children and teachers. For this reason, it is best to schedule your build for when children are on school holidays if possible or to seek another place for children to play nearby.

If this is not possible and children will be present at the site during the build, work with the staff and teachers to create a strategy for managing children in the space. Engage children in the playground plan from the beginning. Get them involved in creating the design using the activities in the "Listen" section. This is their space, so work to make sure they can have as much ownership over it as possible. Make a "play plan" for the build. Children's play drive is unstoppable. If there are spaces children can't play during the build, figure out where they can! Consider whether there is a local park or field children can temporarily use during the time of the build or set up stations for indoor play. Communicate the plans for the playground build directly with the children. Show them photos and drawings of what their playground will look like to get them excited and let them ask questions about what will happen to their space. Let them know what they are and are not allowed to do during the build, and emphasize that we all need to work together to follow these rules so that we'll be able to build a great playground to play on. Consider using colors or signs during the build to communicate boundaries - "If you see red tape around an area that means you can't enter it or touch it! It is not yet ready to play on." Get older children involved in helping to remind younger children of boundaries and rules. Have staff, parents, or volunteers serve as extra monitors during breaks to make sure they stay off the building site. Get the kids involved in the build. Children will love helping to build their playground. Work with teachers and volunteers to allocate tasks appropriate for them like painting, planting, shoveling sand, or sorting and washing tires. Older children may be able to be involved in more complex tasks. Teachers may even be able to be integrate the project into the curriculum. Playground building is a great way to learn math concepts hands-on.

With a good plan in place, not only will your dream playground be possible, but you'll ensure the playground build will be a productive, rewarding experience for everyone involved.

Remember, if you have any questions at all along the way, the Playground Ideas team is here to help! Drop us an email at info@playgroundideas.org - we'd love to hear from you!