

Obstacles to play

Today we live in a world where children's access to play is continuously under threat. Around the world, millions of children do not have adequate time and space to engage in the play they need for healthy development. Many factors can inhibit a child's access to play:

Urbanization

As our world marches towards urbanization, cities are becoming increasingly populated and congested. City planning often does not take space for children's play into account. Without safe, open spaces for children, many children in urban spaces are often left to play in dangerous places or kept indoors by parents worried for their safety.



Gender

In many areas of the world, access to play is not equal between boys and girls. Girls are often expected to perform a larger share of household duties, such as cooking and caring for younger children. This leaves many girls with little time for play.



Ability

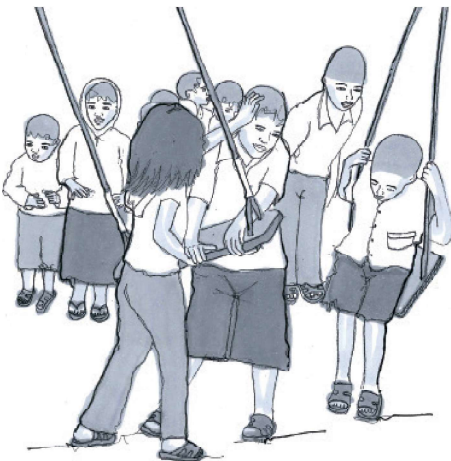


For children born with disabilities, access to play is often a challenge. Most play environments are not designed to accommodate children of all abilities. Or the spaces available for children to play are empty lots and abandoned areas where the ground is impossible for wheelchairs to pass. They need play materials and environments that can accommodate their abilities and for adults and peers to include them in play activities.



Child labour

Children living in poverty are often sent to work to support their families while they are still very young. Forced child labour prevents children from engaging in the play they need to thrive.



Lack of resources

Many schools around the world are overcrowded and lack adequate funding. They do not have the resources they need to build adequate play environments that can accommodate all their students. Insufficient play materials can lead to fighting and competition over resources.

Academic pressure

It is important that students learn to study and perform well in school.

However, many young children receive heavy academic pressure from teachers and parents to perform top of their class. Early literacy and numeracy are prioritized above play-time. This can lead to too much study and too little play, which can be harmful for children's healthy development. It is important that schools and classrooms reflect an understanding that playing is learning and that in addition to cognitive development, play helps children learn all the other essential skills and characteristics that are not taught in classrooms like social skills, emotional control, conflict management and resilience.



Technology

Technology can be a great tool for children to learn, and even play. But when children do not have limits on their exposure to technology, they can spend all their free time watching movies and playing video and computer games. Children need plenty of outdoor, active play with other children and they cannot get this from watching a computer or television screen.

When children do not have adequate time and space to play, they are at risk of experiencing "play deprivation." A play-deprived child can exhibit behavioral problems, social isolation, and can fail to reach their full potential in adulthood. Because of these dangers, the UN has labeled play as a "right" of all children in Article 31 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The right to play must be upheld, defended, and protected to ensure all children experience a healthy childhood and are equipped with the skills they need to thrive as adults.

