



WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PLAYGROUND SURFACE MATERIALS?

There are six different types of playground surface materials. How do you choose which one is right for your new playground? Here is a handy comparison chart of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

| | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| SAND | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive • Easy to install • Provides good impact absorption • Does not easily support microbial growth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to use with mobility devices such as wheelchairs and strollers • May contain asbestos or silica • Easily consumed by young children • Easily be tracked inside on clothes, hair, shoes, etc. • Can hide insects and other pests • Requires constant maintenance, for example- inspection for foreign objects and raking. |
| PEA GRAVEL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive • Easy to install • Provides good impact absorption • Does not easily support microbial growth • Relatively unattractive to insects • Drains more easily than sand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to use with mobility devices such as wheelchairs and strollers • Easily consumed by young children • Easy to place in nose, ears etc. • Can hide insects and other pests • Requires constant maintenance, for example- inspection for foreign objects and raking. |
| ENGINEERED WOOD FIBER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to install • Provides good impact absorption • Stays in place better than loose fill materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made from completely new wood • Can hide insects and other pests • Microbial growth can occur when material is wet • More expensive than sand and pea gravel • Expensive maintenance costs |
| CRUMB RUBBER | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to install, very light • Provides better impact absorption than sand, pea gravel and wood fiber • Low cost to buy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't be used with mobility devices such as wheelchairs and strollers • Easily consumed by young children • Easy to get in shoes, socks, clothing and crevices • Easily tracked inside • The black rubber will discolor clothing and skin • Expensive maintenance costs. • A strong wind will blow it out of the playground footprint |
| TILES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to use with mobility devices such as wheelchairs and strollers • Provides better impact absorption than sand, pea gravel, wood fiber and crumb rubber • Provides consistent shock absorption and good longer term option • Animals do not find this material appealing • Generally low maintenance costs over time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive to buy and install • Must be kept clean and swept regularly • Requires professional setup |
| POUR IN PLACE RUBBER SURFACING | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to use with mobility devices such as wheelchairs and strollers • Provides consistent shock absorption and good longer term option • Animals do not find this material appealing • Generally low maintenance costs over time • Easily repaired | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive to install • Must be kept clean and swept regularly • Requires professional setup |