

Public Playspaces

A fence around an outdoor playspace assists with preventing children from running out into hazards (such as a busy road, water ways) or keeping animals out.

Whilst public playspaces are not required to be fenced, the need for fencing is determined by conducting a risk assessment to AS/NZS ISO 31000 Risk management—principles and guidelines. Designers should assess the most appropriate form of protection. A boundary can make a playground appear more defined, though this of course may not necessarily be a fence. Other possible measures include simple one or two rail fences, bollards, garden beds, hedges, mounding, stone and brick walls or a combinations of these.

It is important that the selected fence or barrier type does not introduce an additional hazard. It is recommended that the fence comply with AS 2423 Coated steel wire fencing products for terrestrial, aquatic and general use or AS 1926.1 amdt 1 Swimming pool safety - Safety barriers for swimming pools. Ensure fence contractors are familiar with these Standards.

It is important to note that several companies manufacture playground fencing which is NOT the same as swimming pool fencing and may have a different opening threshold between vertical or horizontal members. Most fences are not designed to withstand the force of an automobile gone astray.



Education and Care Services

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) requires fencing surrounding education and care services (Class 9b building) to meet the fencing requirements for pools.

AS 1926.1 Swimming pool safety - Safety barriers for swimming pools require 1800mm high fencing to boundaries. Fencing away from the boundary is a minimum height of 1200mm. The gap between pickets is a maximum of 100mm.

Check state and local council planning requirements for fencing including minimum and maximum height, type of fence, construction material and installation.

Ensure a minimum 1000mm is provided between top rail and the next rail down. Rails may provide unintended access to the top of the fence. To prevent falls and unintended access by children, place items/equipment a minimum 900mm from the fence.

Schools

Security fencing is often installed along the perimeter of a school. Schools should assess the most appropriate type of fence for internal or dividing fences within the grounds and consider the recommended fencing specifications on this information sheet, and any other relevant education specifications.

Specifications

Fence Material: The fence can be constructed of a variety of materials such as timber; metal bars or sheeting; or chain-link. The chain-link versions can be covered with a polyvinyl coating that gives the chain link a softer feel. Select materials that are less likely to be climbed or scaled by children.

Gates: Where a gate is provided it is recommended that playground fence gates have self-closing hinges certified to AS 1926.1 Swimming pool safety - Safety barriers for swimming pools. The latch must automatically catch when the gate closes. Monitor as part of routine maintenance inspections to ensure gates remain in sound working order.

Rails: The lower horizontal rail should be positioned at the bottom of the pickets or panel to reduce the likelihood of tunnelling under the fence and preventing unintended access to the top horizontal rail. Avoid a mid horizontal rail where possible.

Top Rail Profile: A flat top rail is recommended. Loop top or rod top may potentially create a hanging point for a child's head between the pickets protruding above the top rail. For existing fences with protruding loops or rods at the top, ensure that climbing access to the top of the fence is not provided.



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Need more help? Kidsafe SA provides a playground inspection service. Contact us for a quote to organise an inspector to visit your playspace and provide specific advice.