

Portable mats such as foam or vinyl covered foam mats may be used as surfacing beneath playground equipment provided the mat is certified to AS 4422 and covers the required impact area.

The benefits of using portable mats as surfacing are as follows:

- Allows for versatility and flexibility of equipment and where the equipment can be set up e.g. indoor play areas and general outdoor areas
- Can be used as required
- Easily stored

Avoid the use of mats on top of playground surfacing e.g. surrounding moveable play equipment items such as trestles and jouncing boards as slip and trip hazards may be created.



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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.

While the mat itself may have a certified impact attenuating rating the problem with foam mats are:

- The mats can move either when the children run across them, land on them or drag them. This means the impact area does not remain the constant recommended distance from the equipment - 1500mm.
- Adequate impact area is difficult to achieve due to mats being small and many are required.
- If the mats have loop and hook fasteners, the loops and hooks can become clogged with debris, compromising the strength of the fastener. Should the mats become detached from each other a child could then fall on a hard surface.
- Portable mats can present as a trip hazard. Vinyl covered foam mats usually wear on the seams and corners causing trip hazards. Zippers that are not closed properly or are broken can also present as a trip hazard.

Any type of portable mat is great for smaller children to play and tumble on. Younger children love to do forward rolls and tumble around, and this can be great exercise for preschool children. For toddlers, a foam mat is safe for them to play and crawl on without getting hurt. Find a mat that is padded enough to be soft for the older children, especially if rolls and handstands are being performed.

