



# How to 'assess' the play value of a setting or space

**Scrapstore**  
**PlayServices**



Registered Charity No: 1008788

The logo for Children's Scrapstore features the word "Children's" in a pink, rounded font. The letter "C" is stylized with a pink paint splatter and a paintbrush stroke. Below it, the word "Scrapstore" is in a blue, rounded font. The letter "t" is stylized with a white star inside its vertical stroke. A registered trademark symbol (®) is at the end of the word.

**Children's  
Scrapstore®**

# Why?

*“Play helps boost children's language development, problem solving, risk management and independent learning skills, a study reaffirms.*

*The report, for the Children's Play Policy Forum, found play improved children's physical and mental health, as well as their emotional well-being.*

*It also found playtime in the school playground could enhance academic skills and attitudes and behaviour.”*

Source: The Play Return: [Are view of the wider impact of play initiatives](#) Gill. T 2014

# Why we developed this process

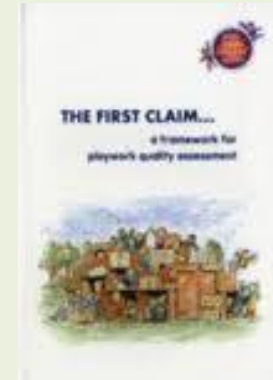
To enable practitioners to consider

- the affordance and assess the 'play value' of their setting
- help support decisions in the development of their spaces for play – avoiding duplication
- maximising on current resources and improving the quality of play opportunities and choices available.



# Play Space Assessment Methodologies

**Play Wales'** The First Claim ... a framework for playwork quality assessment publication aims to enable playworkers, and any other adults with an interest in children's play, to analyse, by observation and reflection, the play environments they operate. It gives a framework to assess the quality of what is being provided and experienced. <http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/firstclaim>



Simply Play is a simple, effective play value assessment which has been developed through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership between **Sheffield Hallam University** and **Timberplay Ltd.** The late Professor **Perry Else** wrote numerous published papers and has authored a book on “The Value of Play”. He offered supervision on this project as well as having created the assessment for play value, “Maximising Play Value” on which Simply Play was based. By developing an assessment which focuses on the quality of the play value of a space the aim has been to put the primary purpose for developing play areas back at the heart of their development, namely play.

<http://d1887160.a22.zeun.co.uk/wp/index.php/history/>



- Affordances are the potential behaviours that arise from the interaction between physical properties of an environment and the ideas and intent of the individual(s). (**J Gibson**, 1977)
- Affordance relates to what play possibilities are *afforded* by children's physical environments. Play affordances can be thought of as visual invitations to play that arise when a child encounters any physical environment.



# Affordance

– What opportunities for play does this space afford to children?





# Play Space Components

## Novelty



- Newness
- Imagination
- Fantasy

## Springboards



- Concepts
- Ideas
- Possibilities

## Loose Parts



- Creativity
- Problem Solving
- Manipulate environment

## Water



- Conceptual understanding
- Tactile
- Investigation

## Fire



- Risk Management
- Exploration
- Respect

## Sand/Earth



- Construction & Deconstruction
- Manipulation
- Creativity

## Senses



- Understanding environment
- Awe
- Self Awareness

## Social



- Communication
- Collaboration
- Resilience

## Directional



- Gross Motor Skills
- Cardio vascular
- Teamwork

## Focussed



- Reflection
- Structured
- Solitary

## Wheeled



- Co-ordination
- Balance
- Fun

## Journeys

- Flow & Connection
- Invitations
- Opportunities

## Landscapes



- Perspective
- Variation
- Change

## Risk



- Risk Benefit
- Limitations
- Challenge and Excitement

## Identity



- Performance
- Confidence & Esteem
- Collaboration



# Assessment Chart

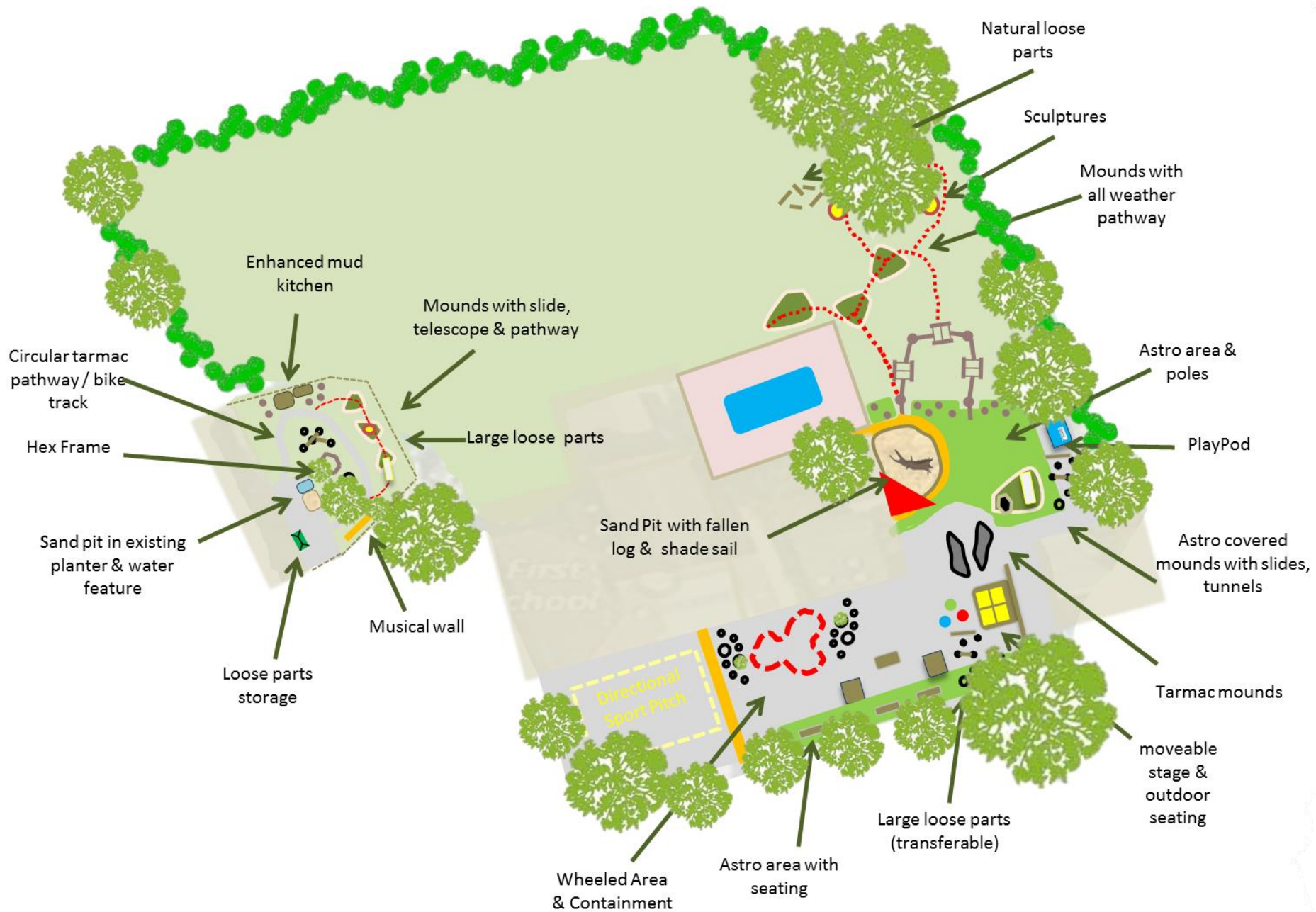


## Scoring:

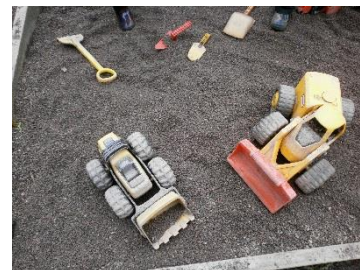
- 0 = poor quality or non-existent
- 1 = low quality or few opportunities
- 2 = Satisfactory quality or number of opportunities
- 3 = Good quality or variety of opportunities
- 4 = excellent quality or wide variety of opportunity

	0	1	2	3	4
Physical Environment					
Novelty: <i>Offers newness, change and engagement</i>					
Springboards: <i>Provide starting points, concepts, ideas &amp; possibilities</i>					
Loose parts: <i>Give opportunity for creativity, problem solving &amp; changing environments</i>					
Water: <i>Enables mastery experiences, conceptual understanding &amp; investigation</i>					
Fire: <i>Creates mastery experiences, risk management, exploration &amp; respect</i>					
Sand/Earth: <i>Provides mastery experience, construction and deconstruction, &amp; creativity</i>					
Senses: Sight – Touch – Taste – Smell – Sound <i>Sets the scene for experimentation and exploration of the environment enabling understanding and a sense of awe.</i>					
Social Spaces: <i>Enables opportunities for communication, collaboration &amp; relationships</i>					
Open Spaces: <i>Gross motor skills, cardio vascular, freedom, teamwork &amp; possibility</i>					
Focussed Spaces: <i>Creates space for reflection, structured and solitary activity &amp; fine motor skills</i>					
Wheeled Space: <i>Offers Co-ordination, balance risk and skill</i>					
Journeys: <i>Enables flow and connection, invitations/opportunities, variation and ways of moving</i>					
Landscapes: <i>Creates perspective, variation seasonal change, materials and possibility.</i>					
Risk: <i>Provides benefit, learning limits, challenge, excitement &amp; resilience</i>					
Identity: <i>Creates opportunity for self-expression, performance, confidence and self-esteem</i>					

Developed from and adapted for assessments in school play environments:  
 The First Claim ... a framework for playwork quality assessment B Hughes 2004  
 Simply Play Assessment Tool Beth Cooper 2012









# Ongoing Reflection...

- Loose parts schools are visited annually
- A relationship is maintained with all
- Partnerships with design and build organisations
- Settings have a blueprint for future developments as funding arrives

...Informs Practice!



<http://childrens-scrapstore.blogspot.co.uk/2017/04/how-to-assess-play-space-for-play-value.html>



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Scrapstore Play Services

# Play Audit

The purpose of a play audit is to:

- Explore the ethos and value of play within the school or setting and assess the outdoor space
- Identify what types of play are currently catered for and what aspects are missing (through observation and conversations with staff and children about the outdoor space)
- Suggest possible improvements to the environment and amendments to logistics that would improve the play opportunities on offer



*Note this document should not be regarded as a specific design brief*