



Adventure Playgrounds— Dangerous or Educational?

Kate Gardner, Sophomore
Reporter

Childhood has changed over the past fifty years. It is evident in our schools, our policies, and, in particular, our playgrounds. The world is centered around ensuring the safety of children, but are we truly helping kids by keeping them safe?

In a classic playground, there are few moving parts. Most modern structures are made of smooth plastic and are often low to the ground. Every hard surface is bolted firmly into place. Sometimes, even wood chips are removed in the fear that they constitute a hazard. Today's playgrounds are designed to remove all risk rather than to be fun for kids. As a result, children are bored, which causes them to make poor choices.

Researchers have found that children accustomed to 'safe' playgrounds have a poorer ability to assess risk. As they are not presented with problems in their environment, children are not encouraged to learn creative problem solving. A well-designed playground prompts learning and fun. Modern playgrounds are designed to protect local governments from lawsuits.

In response to the flaws of modern playgrounds, some parents are pushing for a change in play structure design. Adventure playgrounds, invented in Denmark in the 1940s, present the change that parents seek. Unlike traditional playgrounds, designed to maximize safety, they offer controlled risk through access to building supplies. In adventure playgrounds, children have greater freedom and are invited to make structures themselves. This encourages creativity, collaboration, and improved risk assessment. Children in adventure playgrounds also tend to get more exercise, up to 18% more than children at traditional playgrounds.

Now, these benefits are certainly important, but parents may be concerned as to the risks. Wouldn't access to things such as hammers and nails increase injury? Although true in theory, researchers have found that the developmental benefits gained by children from 'risky play' tend to outweigh the risks such play poses. Research has also found that the safety of modern playgrounds is often outweighed by the negligence such spaces encourage. Parents become distracted, falsely sure of their children's safety.

Children in regular playgrounds are less likely to be careful and more likely to misuse equipment. Because they are bored, children will put themselves in dangerous situations. In adventure playgrounds, children are challenged, and all risks occur in a controlled environment. Adult organizers make sure kids use equipment properly, encourage the kids, and are prepared to step in if an incident occurs. This, coupled with better risk assessment, means kids stay safe while learning life skills.

One important distinction that supporters of adventure playgrounds make is the difference between hazards and controlled risk. A rotting board is a hazard, as it may collapse at any time and presents the possibility of injury. The climbing structure the board is part of, however, presents controlled risk. A child may climb higher, putting themselves at greater risk of injury, but the risk is understood, and it can be controlled based on one's ability. Hazards solely present danger, while risk, when controlled, can provide opportunities for growth. Regular playgrounds fail in that they conflate every risk as a hazard and try to eliminate risk. Adventure playgrounds allow risk, thus allowing learning and growth.

Children will always face danger, and learning to manage danger is a part of growing up. Rather than trying to eliminate risk, we should provide children with support as they learn to manage risk themselves. Free, risky play is a part of childhood, and it prepares children for adult life.

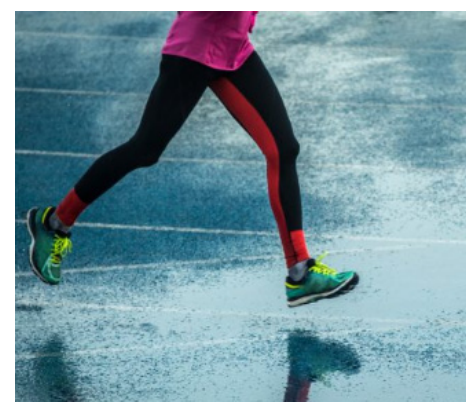


Rain Running

Kristy Twaalfhoven, Senior
Reporter

So, you had a plan to go for a run. But it's raining. Well, not raining—pouring. And windy. Upon checking the weather and observing such a rain storm out the window, many runners immediately shy away to the treadmill. The treadmill is climate-controlled, safe, and predictable. Besides, heading out for a run is courageous enough on its own. Add rain? Now that's a whole new kind of willpower. We're talking deep puddles, soggy socks and sloshy shoes, body soaked to the bone, and potentially blurry vision. Pretty? No. Adventurous? Heck yes.

I am not one to back down from the weather. You can catch me running with ski goggles in a blizzard on a snow day, or wearing a sports bra on the hottest day of August. There is typically one or two days a year when I surrender to the



treadmill, if, for example, black ice covers the roads, or the temperature is below negative 10 degrees. In these situations, it's clear that the discomforts caused by the harsh conditions would diminish the runner's high and would not be beneficial to my training. These two days aside, I believe that weather adds an entirely new element to running. The varying conditions force you to react and adapt while staying focused in the present as you overcome whatever threat the weather may pose. Now, I would love to step outside to a beautiful, breezy, sunny day every single time I run. But I also could not be more certain that running in gritty conditions improves mental toughness. That's why, when I woke up this morning to a squall, I immediately put on my baseball hat (to shield the rain) and headed out the door. When I returned from my exhilarating rain run, my runner's high raging, the time on my watch proved that the rain had indeed fueled my performance. Therefore, for those of you who prefer the comfort of the treadmill, I encourage you to think again next time the weather looks iffy. Give it a try. Feel the rain on your skin. Splash through those puddles like a badass. Grit your teeth against the wind. And when you're home again, check that watch. You'll be surprised.

Beware of Musical Collaboration

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Assistant Editor

Imagine turning on the radio to hear a new song. As the music swells, the melody reveals another artist on the track, and you consider the value of this addition. In the profit-motivated, mainstream music industry, interpersonal collaboration is fairly common. Yet when the persons involved are carefully groomed prize winners, collaboration is a high stakes business exchange. The essence of artistic collaboration—natural and thought-out pairing—is lost to profit-hungry executives and careful algorithms. Of course, collaboration inherently interests a larger group of listeners. However, the best partnerships create beautiful music that is therefore appealing, rather than just radio-friendly soundwaves with no greater significance.

Mainstream music exploits certain tactics to reach widespread popularity. By trading the standard bridge of a pop song for a rap interlude, singers elevate the "cool factor" of their music, entering another elite demographic. In the right moments, rap provides a contrast to an otherwise monotonous pop song. Taylor Swift's "Bad Blood" is transformed by Kendrick Lamar's additions to each verse. While the song was initially Swift's independent piece, a separate version featuring Lamar boosted audience support to heights unknown by the original. The addition was a unique form of collaboration that proved the potential of the song and the power Lamar could have over its theme. This collaboration felt purposeful, and while not necessarily expected, it was certainly thought-out. With a single, watered-down verse, though, songwriters disregard the command of rap music. After all, if a song can stand on its own without an interlude, it clearly does not need to be collaborative.

This undefined and unnecessary collaboration originates from the greater issue of mass appeal. In the mainstream industry, music is produced for profit, and adding one rap verse exposes a song to two pools of revenue. Still, some of the most popular collaborations are between artists of the same genre. Singers frequently harmonize on their peers' songs, but this decision provides less contrast to the style and intent of the main singer, and these moments feel like additions rather than partnerships. In turn, neither fanbase is completely satisfied, because the song isn't the artists' typical work but rather a diluted version that ignores both singers' strengths.

This problem comes from the industry, not the music. Even at the ratings-influenced Grammys, performances feature authentic, purposeful collaboration. One of the best Grammy mashups was when "Best New Artist" nominees Tori Kelly and James Bay sang an acoustic arrangement of Kelly's "Hollow" and Bay's "Let it Go." Two lesser known musicians were given the opportunity to show off, lifting each other up in the process; Kelly's powerhouse vocals pushed Bay's stripped down croons, and Bay pulled a more raw sound from Kelly. The collaboration still appealed to a wide audience, and viewers got the sense that this was a moment both artists celebrated proudly.

Mashups like this are moments of unity, not disillusioned marketing tactics. Still, once the awards show draws to a close, the music industry remains unchanged. Collaboration is exploited, a power move with neglected potential. Beyond an expanded audience, collaboration can raise the strength and influence of a song. In such a personal art form, the fusing of two perspectives holds more power than one. Rather than lifting peers up, though, singers avoid collaboration for the fear of competition. In such a subjective industry, comparison is inevitable, and no singer wants to take second place to their collaborator. Still, collaboration is at the core of all music. Most songs are co-written, and artists are not likely to mix the track themselves. Modern music production is specialized, so the joining of specialized creators defines a song's quality. In all these ways, collaboration is positive. Why do singers only abandon it at the creative level?

At the end of the day, a song is just a song. No matter how far sound waves travel, they eventually fade. In the case of most music, songs are forgotten within days of their release. An artist can't count on listeners to remember all music, but music that means something to its creator will mean something to the people who hear it. Sincere collaboration is even more likely to leave an impression on the listener, as like any form of expression, two perspectives hold more weight than one. Theory aside, does current mainstream music suggest that two is greater than one? The answer varies, but when collaborators enter sessions with the intent of making the best product possible, the outcome leaves listeners wanting to press replay.



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