

WORTH THE RISK?

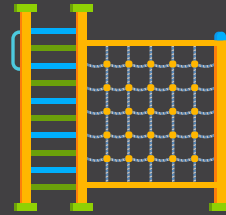
RISKS AND HAZARDS ARE NOT THE SAME!

HAZARD



A danger in the environment that could seriously hurt a child and that a child might not be able to recognize for themselves. It is your responsibility to identify and address hazards. Examples include sharp glass, broken sharp edges, and deep or unsafe water.

RISK



The challenges and uncertainties within the environment that a child can recognize and learn to manage by choosing to encounter them while figuring out their own limits.¹⁶ Taking risks helps children develop their physical literacy. Getting rid of all risks makes children unable to judge danger for themselves.

Adventurous and risky play is thrilling and exciting and involves uncertainty and a risk of physical injury. This type of play gives children the chance to be challenged, test their limits, explore their boundaries and learn about the risk of getting hurt. What counts as risky or adventurous is different for each child and changes as the child grows up.

OR ADVENTUROUS BENEFITS OF RISKY PLAY¹⁷

Everyday life is full of risks and challenges. Children need the chance to learn how to manage risk and make smart choices about risk from a young age. Exposure to risks (i.e. challenges and uncertainties) through play can aid children in better assessing risk as they age.¹⁸

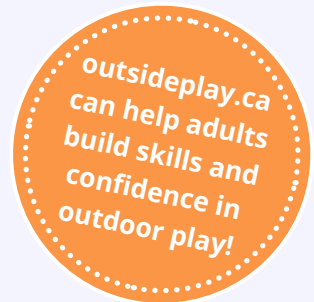
One idea is that some injuries serve as ‘learning injuries’. The reasonable injury that results, such as a scrape, bump or bruise, is a good learning for the next attempt by the child. Adults would continue to pay attention to risk of serious injury, and hazards, while knowing learning injuries have a role in physical skills development.

WHEN A CHILD TAKES RISKS, THEY...

- Develop physical skills like balance, coordination, strength and stamina
- Develop persistence, confidence and resilience
- Become better at thinking and understanding natural consequences
- Figure out how the world works, learning how to use tools and materials safely
- Become aware of what their bodies are capable of, which helps them learn how to judge and manage risk
- Reduce their own risk of injury¹⁹

ADVENTUROUS AND RISKY PLAN CAN BE THOUGHT OF IN SEVEN WAYS²⁰:

1. Play with great heights
2. Play with high speed
3. Play with tools
4. Play near elements of nature
5. Rough-and-tumble play
6. Play where children can “disappear” or have sense of being exploring alone
7. Play with impact and landing with impact



Adapted from the work of Dr. Ellen Sandseter

This content forms part of a larger booklet entitled “Why Outdoor Play Matters for Children: A practical guide for parents and caregivers”. To see the full booklet, and references, please go to recreationns.ns.ca.