

# Mounds for Play



Do you remember when you were a child – the fun you had rolling down a mound? Or maybe running down a grassy embankment with your arms wide open, feeling the breeze on your face? These are the simple things children of today enjoy just as much as we did.

A “good playground” is not necessarily an expensive one, but one which is imaginative in its layout and where possible, one that has items which can be regularly changed (eg. loose parts, unstructured and natural playspaces).

Mounds give a three dimensional aspect to an area that may be otherwise flat and a child may experience a feeling of being the king or queen of the castle and view the world from a different level.

Mounds can be crawled over safely by babies, can be used to “hide” behind, for sitting or lying on, and can have a wide variety of play items added to them.



## Construction

*Kidsafe NSW* recommends that mounds are constructed with a maximum of 1 in 3 gradient to allow children access without slipping. If a ride-on mower is used on grassed mounds then this gradient should be a maximum of 1 in 4. This means that for every 1 metre in height, the mound will need to be 3 (or 4) metres in width. An extra 1 metre flat area should be provided on top of the mound to allow the addition of a landing or low level platform. Therefore a 1 metre high mound should be 7 metres in diameter.



## Slides on Mounds

Mounds can be used for a variety of other items which can be installed on or through the mound. These can include slides which are installed onto the mound giving added safety as a child could only fall from a reduced height. This reduces the cost where the slide is less than 600mm above ground and therefore impact attenuating surfacing is not required to the side of the slide. However, a 1000mm free space is required from the centre of the slide to each side and an impact area filled with impact attenuating surfacing (1m rating) is required to be provided 1000mm to the sides of the run-out section.

The length of the impact area depends on the type of slide being installed into the mound. Refer to the information sheet titled *Falling Space and Impact Area*.

At the top and bottom of the slide *Kidsafe* recommends the addition of a synthetic product such as wet pour rubber, rubber mats or synthetic grass to eliminate erosion. Timber decks may be used at the top of the slide for this purpose but may become slippery when damp or wet. Consideration may be given to installing anti-slip rubber strips to timber decks.



## Tyres in Mounds

To eliminate erosion on the sides of the mound near slides or other items, recycled tyres can be inserted into the mound. Stepped tyres can assist to provide access to the top of the mound. Non steel belted radials are preferred but are difficult to obtain. The steel belted variety can be used but they must have sufficient tread and be regularly inspected to ensure the steel belting does not protrude. If cracks do form in the tyres these should be removed and replaced with newer tyres. Second hand (and free) tyres are usually available through your nearest tyre distributor.

To insert tyres into the mound construct a series of "steps". Lay the tyres beginning at the bottom of the mound and compact clay into each tyre thoroughly. Offset the second layer over the joint below, the same way a brick wall is bonded. Construct the third and subsequent layers the same way, with each level overlapping the lower one to ensure they "bond" together.



## Sensory Experiences

Sound and sight pipes can be installed through mounds. These are great for spying through and making all sorts of sounds! Purchase 90mm diameter PVC stormwater drain pipe and lay these at a slight angle (for drainage) on the mound prior to completing the mound construction.

Finish laying the remainder of the soil on the mound. The pipes should be capped with PVC grates purchased at any hardware shop, to prevent creatures from nesting and debris collecting in the pipes. Finish with rubber tubing glued to the edge to make a soft edge for children's faces. One metre square rubber grid mats on the ground at each pipe end will create a 'station' and minimise erosion.



## Include Plants

Mounds can be landscaped with plants suitable to your area including small trees for shade, shrubs and native grasses. A list of suitable plants may be discussed with the horticulturist at your local nursery. These can include banksias, bottle brushes, paper barks, mallee eucalypts, scribbly gums, coastal rosemary, fountain grass and lavender.

## Other Inclusions

Other items which can be incorporated with mounds include timber stages, shopfronts, pergolas, telephones, dry creek beds, boulders, rock climbing activities and fragrant gardens using aromatic plants. Bridges can be installed between a series of mounds and if kept below 600mm above ground level these do not need certified surfacing. Amphitheatres are perfect for setting into mounds using sleepers with step height of around 375mm high and the tread approximately 600mm deep to allow for seating.

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