



## Splash Play Areas

### Getting Value From Splash Play

While almost all types of play have been said to provide meaningful benefits, outdoor play has been singled out as particularly valuable. The unique characteristics of water play help set it apart as a type of play that offers important opportunities for growth and engagement with the world. When kids and adults alike play with water, they have a multi-sensory experience—one that often allows for teamwork and interaction, discovery and learning, as well as exercise to increase physical fitness and agility.

One of the cultural challenges in the United States right now is the "nature deficit," a term coined by author Richard Louv. This idea is gaining popularity and support, with research suggesting that modules in our brain are devoted to the living world and possibly biophilia (an innate human need for natural interaction). This is compounded by a deprivation of the amount of time and quality of play for today's growing children. Interactive, stimulating and safe play in a natural setting provides the ultimate play experience, offering pleasurable experiences for children while ensuring full development, mastery and self-efficacy.



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Currently, splash play areas have become a big trend in small towns, residential areas and communities. These new aquatic facilities attract children and parents alike. They are places of gathering and energize environments by bringing a sense of belonging to the community. Updated park and recreation facilities are more than just great spaces, they represent a community coming together to reclaim its neighbourhood.

### Built-in Value of Play

Aquatic amenities like splashpads are designed to be a source of fun and include a greater value of play than many traditional facilities. Today's products promote more cooperative teamwork and facilitate interaction between different age groups. They also incorporate the benefits of communal play and promote physical, social, emotional, psychological and developmental well-being. Play facilitates the enhancement of all these capacities by engaging the person holistically.

This type of water experience fosters learning in all developmental areas. It provides opportunities for children to strengthen physical skills, social and emotional skills, and enhance language development.

When children manipulate various water play materials, they begin to understand why and how things occur. For instance, given sinking and floating objects, a child will soon discover that just because something is large in size does not mean it will sink.

In addition, water play is considered to be one of the most relaxing activities children can experience. Water play activities relieve tension by encouraging children to release their emotions with pouring, pounding and swooshing. Furthermore, social skills expand as children play cooperatively, negotiate, and share equipment, space and materials.

Furthermore, water encourages children to use their imagination and creativity. As children play, they often pretend to live in a castle or work at a car wash. It also encourages children to try out new ideas and solutions to problems in a safe environment.

### Fun for All!

Since aquatic amenities for all age groups are in greater demand, having something to offer both children and adults is a definite priority. Age-appropriate play is an important design aspect for parks and recreation facilities. To

meet and exceed various citizens' needs, park and recreation directors may consider having distinct activity bay areas within an installation.

For instance, a toddler bay offers an environment with soft, non-intimidating water effects. This allows young children to engage in cognitive development, motor skill development, sensory discovery and socialization through interaction and object play. Infants and preschoolers are introduced to vibrant colors, stimulating textures and various water shapes that invigorate users as they enjoy the experience of free play. This is also a safe setting, which encourages enhanced development. Children can then learn by openly and assertively interacting with their environment without fear—a key element in self-development.

Water play is incorporated with object manoeuvrability and cause-and-effect manipulability. Children interact with their environment by activating and rotating play products and by engaging with the different jet-stream product features. Automation starts with a hand- or foot-activated device that allows children to operate the various spray sequences. The controller then takes over to distribute water to the different features, allowing ground sprays, water effects and play products to optimize their play time. These vertical play products and ground sprays operating at different times and locations generate interest and interactivity within the splashpad zones.

Moreover, children benefit immensely from cooperative play in the development of emotional regulation. As social creatures, the playground provides an environment for children to learn societal rules that govern culture. They learn to regulate their behaviour for the sake of maintaining the play atmosphere.

A second bay, for example a teen bay, offers various aquatic products such as water cannons, that will encourage team water battles or perhaps individual duos. This area allows the most energetic users to engage in high-intensity activities, and the interaction with these water features develops knowledge-reasoning, perception and intuition skills. In addition, these features also promote collaborative and interactive play, while helping to develop physical and social skills and contributing positively to a participant's aerobic capacity, muscular strength and agility reflexes. Overall, this environment promotes interaction between users, learning-recognition values, social roles and collaboration.

The last group-area, considered to be the ultimate site for interaction amongst all age groups, is where social benefits are innumerable for adults and children alike. The family bay strengthens family ties, fosters new relationships and rekindles old friendships. This area is typically configured for cross-generational activities

between parents and children. Parents play an important role in emotional regulation. For instance, when a father and son engage in rough and tumble play, research shows the child will possess superior regulation of aggression.

Overall, aquatic play products—with their distinctive designs and independent play and skill development features—allow users to move freely and join in on the fun. Most of these recreational offerings and facilities are universally accessible and offer a range of users an equal opportunity for engagement. The majority of aquatic products are designed to meet or exceed the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

When cities progressively enhance their communities' image, they demonstrate powerful statements. The ones that constantly work on improving the lives of their citizens show the community that they are actively involved in their comfort and well being. Aquatic facilities are the ideal tool for bringing a community together while promoting the value of water play.



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