

'How to use' guide for safety surfacing products supplied by Playbark.com

Several considerations need to be assessed before selecting a specific play grade safety surfacing, less commonly known as a 'Loose Impact Attenuating Surface'.

These considerations include:

- Budget
 - Best Value
 - Longevity
 - Age of Children
 - Aesthetics
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- **Budget:** Fortunately, when you purchase a safety surface product from Playbark.com, we have an extremely large range of products and we are confident we will have a product which suits everybody's budget.

By selecting a more competitively priced product, this does not necessarily determine this product is more inferior compared to the more expensive products, sometimes they are simply cheaper for us to produce and distribute.

We suggest you assess the pictures of the product, relate this to other factors such as the age of the children and the type of play equipment you have. In addition, look at the 'critical fall height' figures and make a decision based on these factors, if you are unsure, please contact us.

- **Best Value:** This is a principle followed by many Local Authorities. Everybody's play area is different, if one particular surface suits one play area it may not all together suit another.

By having a more expensive product, in certain circumstances this may prove more cost effective than a less expensive product if the lesser priced product isn't suited to a certain application and has to be regularly replaced.

- **Longevity:** The principles stated above readily apply here, however sometimes a safety surface is only needed for a short space of time so a less expensive product may suffice.

The longevity of the products differ and although we provide guide lines with regards to the life of the product, if the surfacing is to ultimately endure heavy footfall and play on a regular basis, logic determines it won't last as long as a play surfacing used occasionally.

Other factors need to be considered here such as drainage (see later article) and exposure to the elements.

- **Age of Children:** Although all of our safety surfacing products are very safe, it is essential care and consideration is given to product selection.

There is a common misconception that all products which have been tested to the BS EN1177:2008 Standard will be suitable for any age of children, this is incorrect.

It should be understood, this Standard of testing determines 2 main factors: Critical Fall Height and HIC (Head injury Criteria).

This testing procedure simply produces a set of results which determine safe fall height of a child from a given height.

A product may have this very credible certification but it doesn't suggest a particular product may be suitable for very young children, it may be the case the product is ideal for a zip wire for older children, but in essence the product may be still a little too sharp or spiky for young ones.

Similarly as parents we cannot account for children deciding to put the product in their mouths, so very young children should be supervised.

- **Aesthetics:** We can spend time assessing the functionality and performances of the play area surfaces but as parents if we literally don't like the appearance of it we will never be happy!

At Playbark.com we are certain we have a product which ticks all of the boxes, combining safety with appearance whilst falling in line with our budget.

If unsure, please ask for samples.

Domestic applications and Public/Commercial Spaces.

Loose fill materials may displace during use, we always suggest that when an impact absorbing surface is desired, the depth is increased according to the degree of maintenance and level of activity. (As with all loose impact absorbing products, raking is recommended to maintain the desired thickness).

We believe there is no formal requirement or standard for an impact absorbing surface to be used in a residential situation and you should carry out your own risk assessment as appropriate to your individual circumstances.

NB Commercial or public areas are covered by more detailed requirements BS EN1176 relating to loose fill impact absorbing products, requiring greater depths of all loose fill products in a public environment. In accordance with BS EN 1177 (2008) an additional 100mm of material should be included to allow for displacement in use.

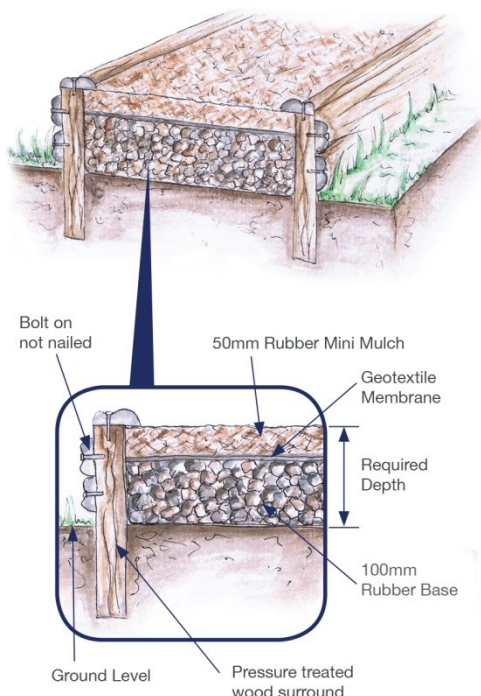
The Creation of a new Play Area.

Drainage:

It is essential the area which is being considered for use as a play area has good drainage, if it doesn't, irrelevant of the play surfacing purchased the area will become muddy, it could even flood which will be a sure way to waste money.

If the drainage is poor, handymen and DIY enthusiasts may be able to install a simple

Above Ground Level Pit



'Herringbone' drainage system without costing the earth. Good examples can be viewed on YOUTUBE.

If this is one step too far, we suggest you talk to a reputable landscaper or ground worker.

Types of Play Areas.

Above & Below Ground Construction:

This illustration shows an example of a play area constructed above and below ground.

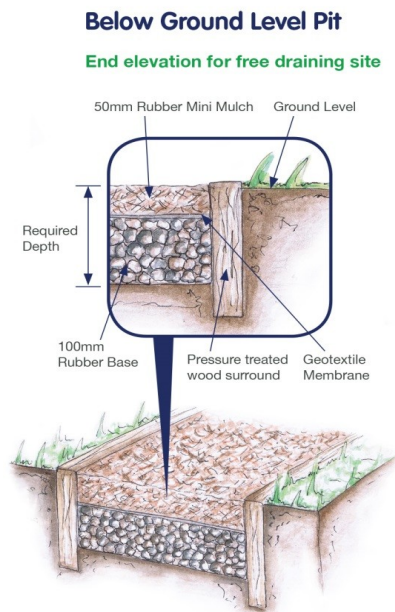
We advise utilising tanalised timbers or sleepers as these will last longer.

Or consider our Rubber Edging for ultimate safety: <http://playbark.com/content/rubber-border-edging>

In this illustration we are using the rubber mini mulch along with a rubber base for ultimate safety.

The rubber base can be replaced with clean aggregate if required, or simply use the play surfacing of your choice at the required depth.

Below Ground Construction:



- **Depth of application:**

All of our play/safety surfacing products are tested to BS EN1177:2008.

This standard provides the user with a set of results which objectively provide as a guide safe 'maximum playing heights' or CFH (Critical Fall Height) for the products usually at 2 depths namely 100mm (4") and 300mm (12").

Although these tests have been conducted and the results determined under laboratory conditions (tested utilising a concrete base), these results should be treated as guidelines only and we always recommend extra material is laid as mentioned earlier in this document.

- **How to lay the safety surfacing:**

Once the play area has been prepared as illustrated above, we recommend the base of the play area is lined with a weed control membrane, this will not only assist in

the reduction of annual weeds emerging through the play surfacing but will also reduce friction between the play surfacing and the sub base therefore increasing the longevity of the material.

Applying the play surfacing couldn't be easier, simply flood the designated area with the play surfacing to the very top of the retaining walls of the area, it is important to remember the play surfacing will ultimately settle after time (approx. 15% over 30 days*)

***Excludes Rubber Chippings and Rubber Mini Mulch which has very minimal settlement**

- **Always check the material whilst laying and after installation:**

Most of the play surfacing products we offer are derived from natural organic materials.

Therefore, although they are vigorously screened to meet size and product specifications, this process cannot remove every last piece of foreign matter.

With this in mind, we ask every installer to be vigilant whilst laying the material and also to check over the surfacing once laid and remove anything (if anything) which could be a concern.

- **Maintenance Guide:**

One of the most common causes of unsatisfactory Loose Impact Attenuating Surfaces is inadequate simple maintenance. All play facilities and surfaces should be kept free from hazards. Play Areas therefore need to be inspected and maintained on a regular basis.

We suggest regular (daily for public open spaces) site checks are performed ensuring no visible contaminants have been thrown onto the area which could cause harm or injury.

We suggest the area is raked weekly to ensure the surface optimum appearance is maintained whilst making sure the depth of the LIAS is consistent over the entire area.

If any of the areas have become sparse due to heavy traffic or play, consider replenishing these areas with new product to ensure safety.

Additionally, this will ensure the LIAS doesn't 'compost' which will affect the performance and will encourage weed growth.

If annual or perennial weeds do appear, remove by hand ensuring the root is removed along with the main weed plant or if you choose to use a weed killer, ensure you use a reliable proprietary brand which is systemic.

Isolate the area and follow the guidelines stipulated on the label.

Topping up existing play areas:

Although it is very common place to consider topping up a play area with new 'play bark' we strongly advise due consideration is given to the condition of the existing material which has inevitably decomposed.

Quite often this decomposed material has become extremely compressed and firm, especially in dry conditions and if new play bark is laid on top, especially at minimal depth, the new material will wear extremely quickly simply due to abrasion!

This situation applies more so with the chunkier types of material where it requires greater depth to knit together to provide settlement and therefore to provide a safe surface. The application of new play bark always has to have a credible depth to be functional and to perform correctly.

If the older material has become very hard and compact, consider removing it and replacing with new, this way it will remove the issues as mentioned above and will also prevent the new play bark spilling out of the play area due to the surfacing being too high.