

Sandpits

Sandpits are a fun way for children to socialise with others. Most children love to build and model objects out of sand. To ensure that children gain the best experience from your sandpit it is important to consider a few basic construction and maintenance guidelines.

Size

Ideally one large sandpit is preferred to several smaller ones. Size is dependent on the number of children using the service but a general guideline is 15m² for 20 children, 30m² for 40 children, and 40m² for 60 children.

Kidsafe recommends that sandpits should allow for a minimum depth of 500mm sand. Sandpits can be of various shapes and even split level.

Setting

Sandpits are traditionally seen as a quiet play space and it is important they are positioned away from the main flow of traffic yet can be easily supervised. Corners of playgrounds and aligning fence lines are preferred sandpit locations.

The incorporation of natural elements such as boulders, dry creek beds and strappy plantings with sandpit design are popular and aid in establishing a special "sense of place".

Consider setting boulders into your sandpit or edging. Boulders should be large enough to sit on or to be used as small building decks and should measure from 300-700mm across and 300-450mm high. The boulders should be positioned so they are stable and cannot be moved or tilted. Most importantly any sharp edges of boulders or rocks must be rounded off.



Introduce plantings to at least one edge of the sandpit and include groundcovers, strappy plants, plumed grasses and shade trees. Location of a tap nearby or access to water such as a water tank is recommended for additional play value with wet sand.

Shade

Kidsafe recommends that sandpits are adequately shaded. Deciduous trees can be used to provide shade in summer whilst open branches allow the sun to filter through in winter. A shade structure with removable sails may assist whilst the surrounding trees become established.

Sand selection is important. Washed beach or river sand is recommended. Builder/brick sand is not recommended.



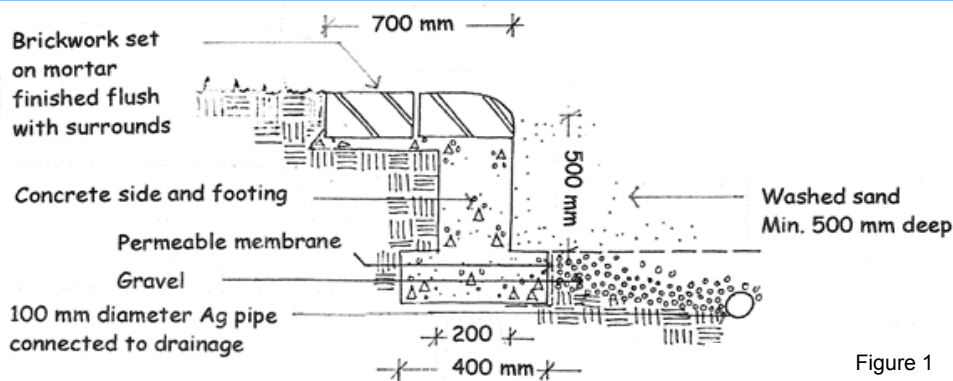


Figure 1



Construction

The sides of sandpits may be formed from timber logs or concrete with the edge and paved areas constructed from concrete or pavers (refer to Figure 1). The inner edge facing the sandpit should not present a sharp corner/surface. Ensure that any timber used in construction is not treated with CCA or creosote. Refer to the *Kidsafe information sheet: Timber in Playspaces*.

Paved Surround

A 700mm wide paved edge surrounding the sandpit provides an easy to sweep surface that helps keep the sand in place. Making two 700 mm wide ledges adds to the play experience as children are inevitably drawn to placing their masterpiece on a ledge to dry.

Drainage

Adequate drainage includes the installation of a drainage membrane/geotextile fabric separating the sand from the gravel sub base (refer to Figure 1). If the site is not free draining install agriculture pipes within the gravel and connect to the storm water system to assist drainage.

Maintenance

Kidsafe NSW recommends that the sandpit is inspected daily and regular maintenance occurs. The sand must be raked over daily to remove debris (sun and fresh air are good disinfectants), turned over monthly to aerate the sand and replenished when the sand level drops 100mm below the top edge of the sandpit. As a guideline, it is recommended that the sand is replaced annually or as required.

Remove sand contaminated by food or other materials, human or animal faeces, blood or other bodily fluids. Where extensive contamination has occurred, all sand should be replaced.

Covers

Sandpits should be protected with a tight-fitting animal and vermin proof cover such as tarpaulin or shade cloth when not in use. *Kidsafe* recommends the use of shade cloth for a sandpit cover as it allows water to permeate through without pooling on top of the cover.



For regular shaped sandpits a square piece of shade cloth may be attached to a piece of hollow PVC pipe. For irregular shaped sandpits a cover may be assembled from a piece of shade cloth with a heavy galvanised chain sewn into the hem to keep the cover in place.

Some sandpit covers also function as shade cover when hoisted above the sandpit during the day (as pictured above right). Avoid creating trip hazards with the placement of raised fasteners for covers within the surrounding play bench.



Aeration and sunshine is the most effective way of disinfecting sand.

