Starting a Community Playgroup:

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in starting a community playgroup with Playgroup NSW.

By volunteering to start a playgroup, you're helping create a welcoming space where children can learn through play, families can connect, and local communities can thrive. This guide will take you through the key steps to establish a successful community playgroup, with support from Playgroup NSW every step of the way.

What is a Community Playgroups?

Community playgroups are:

- Led by local volunteers who are passionate about supporting children and families.
- Typically run for one to two hours per session.
- Flexible and responsive to the needs of local families.
- Delivered in safe, accessible community venues.
- Inclusive and welcoming of all families.
- Designed to provide play experiences that support children's learning and development.
- A place where families can build friendships and feel connected to their community.
- Structured to include a mix of free play, creative experiences, group time, morning tea and outdoor play.

Getting Started

Setting up a playgroup is easier than you might think. The key steps are:

1. Build your volunteer committee.
2. Find a suitable venue.
3. Affiliate your playgroup with Playgroup NSW.
4. Set your playgroup fees.
5. Open a bank account.
6. Gather toys and equipment.
7. Promote your playgroup.

How to Start a Playgroup

Step 1 – Build Your Volunteer Committee

Each community playgroup is started by two to three dedicated volunteers who share the goal of creating a welcoming local space for families to connect and children to learn through play. These volunteers form the first committee, taking on key roles such as Coordinator, Treasurer and Secretary, while encouraging teamwork and collaboration with all playgroup members. See description of roles on last page of document.

Ways to build your committee include:

- Ask local parents or carers you have met through parents' groups, early childhood services or community activities.
- Start a playgroup with friends or families who are interested in volunteering together.
- Post a local call-out in community Facebook groups or parent networks to find others who may like to help.

Step 2 – Find a Suitable Venue

To establish a playgroup in your community, you will need access to a safe, suitable and accessible venue.

Possible venue options include:

- Council venues, including community centres and halls.
- Churches, religious halls or community facilities.
- Preschools and childcare centres.
- Primary schools.
- Recreational or multipurpose spaces.
- Girl Guides or Scout halls.

When choosing a venue, consider whether it offers:

- A safe environment that is free from hazards.
- Good access by public transport and suitable parking.
- Storage space for toys, equipment and resources.
- Affordable hire costs, ask about discounted rates for not-for-profit or community groups.
- Bathroom and kitchenette facilities.
- Tables and chairs available for use.
- Suitable days and times for regular playgroup sessions.
- Outdoor space with shade
- Safe separation from bodies of water such as ponds, creeks, rivers or swimming pools.
- Adequate fencing

Once you have found a venue and chosen a day and time, affiliate your playgroup with Playgroup NSW (see step 3), then forward the lease to the Playgroup NSW administration team so the terms and conditions can be reviewed.

Step 3 – Affiliate Your Playgroup with Playgroup NSW

Affiliating your playgroup is simple. First, ensure all committee members and participants have a free Playgroup NSW membership. This can be completed easily through the 'Become a Member' page on Playgroup NSW website: HERE

Once memberships are in place, register your playgroup by completing the Community Playgroup: Affiliation Form: HERE

Affiliation provides playgroups with:

- Free advertising on the Playgroup NSW website.
- Ongoing support from Playgroup NSW staff.
- Promotional resources, including flyers, brochures and social media tiles.
- Playgroup resources and templates.
- Subscription to e-newsletters and access to member benefits.
- Insurance coverage for playgroup members.

Step 4 – Set Your Playgroup Fees

Most playgroups collect participant fees to help cover day-to-day operating costs. A term fee is recommended, although weekly fees can also work well, with payments collected and monitored by the Treasurer.

When setting fees, consider the expected costs of running the playgroup, including:

- Venue hire or rent.
- Toys, equipment and consumable supplies.
- Any additional resources needed to support safe and engaging sessions.

Fees should remain low so that families can access the benefits of playgroup, including early learning opportunities and social-emotional support. As the playgroup becomes established, additional fundraising options may include donations, raffles, community fundraising activities and grants. Playgroup NSW can provide support as your group progresses.

Step 5 – Open a Bank Account

Each playgroup that collects money needs a bank account to manage funds safely and transparently. Most banks offer low-fee or no-fee accounts for not-for-profit community groups. Choose a bank that is convenient for committee members, contact the bank to confirm what is needed to open an account, then arrange a time for the committee to visit together and complete the setup.

Good financial practice includes:

- Open the account in the playgroup’s name, for example, ABC Playgroup.
- List the three committee members as signatories on the account. Signatories must not be related.
- Require two committee members to approve any outgoing payments.
- Ensure at least two committee members can view and access the account.
- Allocate a Treasurer to keep clear records of money received and spent.

- Report financial information to the committee regularly.
- Bank all cash in full by the next business day, or the next day the bank is open.

As a charitable organisation, Playgroup NSW requires money collected from participants to be used for public benefit and playgroup purposes only. Funds must not be used for individual benefit and remain the property of the playgroup. When committee members change, outgoing members should be removed from the account and new members added. If a playgroup closes, remaining funds must be returned to Playgroup NSW, where they will be used to support other playgroups.

Step 6 – Gather Toys and Equipment

Your playgroup will need toys, equipment and resources to get started. Playgroup NSW can provide a basic starter kit for new playgroups, and volunteers may also wish to source additional items locally.

Additional resources may be sourced through:

- Family and friends.
- Garage sales or online marketplaces.
- Donations from local businesses, services or community groups.
- Thrift shops and second-hand stores.

A balanced playgroup environment usually includes both indoor and outdoor play opportunities. Useful play areas and resources may include:

- **Creative arts:** crayons, pencils, paper and craft materials.
- **Construction:** building blocks, LEGO, cardboard boxes, loose parts and paper cups.
- **Imaginative play:** dress-ups, dolls, puppets, pretend kitchens or home corners.
- **Physical play:** balls, bikes, balance beams and parachutes.
- **Sensory play:** playdough, water play and bubble stations.
- **Quiet play:** books, puzzles, sensory toys and tents.
- **Music and movement:** ribbon sticks and musical instruments.

To create a comfortable and welcoming environment for families, consider including:

- Tables and chairs, including child-sized furniture where possible.
- Playmats or rugs for children to play on.
- Plastic tubs or baskets for presenting and storing resources.
- Plastic plates and cups.
- Tea and coffee facilities, including keep-safe cups and a kettle.
- Food preparation utensils.
- Messy play shirts or old clothes for messy play or craft activities.

Step 7 – Promote Your Playgroup

Playgroup NSW provides statewide marketing and advocacy for playgroups, including a listing for each affiliated playgroup on the Playgroup NSW website. You can personalise your website listing with details about when and where your playgroup meets, as well as any other information that may be helpful for families. To update your listing, please contact Playgroup NSW.

Enquiries about your playgroup can be submitted through the website and will be forwarded to your allocated playgroup email address.

It is recommended that each playgroup creates a dedicated email address for communication and promotion, such as abcplaygroup@gmail.com.

Volunteers can also promote the playgroup locally by:

- Sharing Playgroup NSW social media tiles on community pages and parent interest groups.
- Requesting listings on Council and library websites.
- Sharing information through school and preschool newsletters.
- Sending information to child and family health services, hospitals and local GPs.
- Seeking inclusion in local RSL, bowling club or community newsletters.
- Organising a local media release through newspapers or community media platforms.
- Encouraging participants to promote the playgroup through their own networks.

Begin promoting your playgroup a few weeks before the official start date. Including details of planned activities for the first session can help generate interest and encourage families to attend.

Where to Get Help and Information

Playgroup NSW is here to support you as you establish and grow your community playgroup. Once your playgroup is affiliated, our team can provide tools, resources, guidance and practical support to help you run a welcoming and successful playgroup.

Helpful places to find information include:

- **Playgroup NSW website:** including parent information articles and play activities
- **Volunteer Resource Hub:** Access policies, templates and practical resources for volunteers.

You can also contact Playgroup NSW directly for support:

- **Free call:** 1800 171 882
- **Email:** admin@playgroupnsw.org.au

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE MEMBER POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

COORDINATOR	
Coordination	• Coordinate playgroup sessions including set-up, routines, pack down, rosters, excursions, speakers etc.
Communication	• Act as the main point of contact with PGNSW. • Model open communication and welcome all new attendees and members. • Pass on all relevant information to playgroup members (e.g. outings, meetings, policies and PGNSW correspondence.) • Act as a contact point for members needing information or support.
Safety and compliance	• Ensure safety of all attendees, including that venue is safe and all defects are reported.
Meetings	• Arrange and chair all meetings. • Ensure the Annual General Meeting is held within 6 weeks of the end of the financial year
Financial	• Act as a co-signatory to the bank account. • Review the Treasurer's books regularly.
SECRETARY	
Coordination	• Support the Playgroup Volunteer Committee with playgroup coordination and tasks.
Communication	• Write and receive correspondence. • Liaise with the owners of the playgroup premises as necessary. • Notify Playgroup NSW of any changes to Playgroup Volunteer Committee members.
Safety and compliance	• Ensure attendance is collected at each session. • Ensure all attendees are or become Playgroup NSW members • Ensure all relevant records are kept. • Arrange toy and equipment inventory to be done once a year and send to PGNSW
Meetings	• Provide an agenda at least two weeks before General Meetings and the Annual General Meeting. • Take minutes (or delegate a minute taker) at meetings and send a copy of minutes to PGNSW and all members.
Financial	• Act as a co-signatory to the bank account.
TREASURER	
Coordination	• Support the Playgroup Volunteer Committee with playgroup coordination and tasks.
Communication	• Keep the playgroup informed of its financial position.
Meetings	• Present the financials at all meetings • Present the reviewed financial statements to the AGM.
Financial	• Collect and bank all session fees and extra money by the next banking day, keeping an accurate record of income and expenditure • Ensure receipts are issued for all incoming monies or noted financial records with date, amount and from whom. • Present the financial records to the coordinator for signing each month or at each playgroup meeting. • Act as a co-signatory to the bank account. • Ensure all spending is approved • Send Annual Financial Statement to PGNSW showing the playgroup's financial position as of 30 September.