



Kid-Proofing Your Back Yard for Summer Play

While your child playing alone tends to focus on one activity or area, with two or more children together, expect several simultaneous activities. Plan the play area for more than one child and plan it for multiple activities – remember that when your kid's pals are in your yard, you're responsible for their safety, too. Here are a few ideas for keeping kids safe in the yard:

- **Lock up the garden tools and equipment.** Lock up weed killer, bug spray and anything else your child will find interesting – and dangerous.
- **Keep plastic chairs stacked when not in use;** they tip as soon as a little person leans the wrong way. For whatever reason, when neatly stacked on the patio, they are generally ignored by kids.
- **Fencing is always a concern.** Can it be climbed? High wood fences work well provided there is nowhere for kids to get a hold on them.
- Locate outdoor tables and chairs where kids can't stand on them to reach something else.
- The **propane grill** makes a great meal, but is a huge safety hazard for the kids. Keep kids far away from the grill and never leave them alone when a grill is lit. Lock up the propane tank when finished with grilling.
- Some of the best **outdoor toys** are trucks and cars, shovels and pails, doll buggies, plastic mud molds, even a trike or other ride-ables if you have the space and no stairs or steep inclines. The closer to the ground the toys, the safer their users.
- **Skipping ropes**, climbable equipment, bats, racquets, and balls can create problems. They are easy to use as weapons when kids get into an argument. Know your child and his playmates before using these games.
- Spreading foam exercise mats on **concrete surfaces** not only save scrapes but provides another colorful play surface. They are usually not expensive and can last several years.
- **Sand boxes** are great fun for young children. Make sure yours has a cover to keep off the rain and, especially, to keep out the critters, which love them for basic toileting. The formed plastic sand boxes are best. They come with lids light enough for toddlers to remove and replace.
- **Do not leave kids unattended**, even for a minute, with any kind of pool, even a small wading pool can be a drowning hazard.

The ultimate kid proofing is to tune your ears to what's normal out there and what's not and never be out of earshot for long. Silence in the yard means you need to look out the window or door right away. Check on kids regularly!

