



Play Streets Aotearoa Toolkit

Play is important!

Play Streets are a great way to make sure play keeps happening in our communities.

Neighbourhoods don't get together and play like they used to – some people worry about safety or perceived risks from playing outside, and some people feel disconnected from their neighbours. Technology has also impacted how we play and families have competing priorities that take them away from playing.

Play Streets are a fun way for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to play outside, be active, get to know each other, and promote better connected neighbourhoods. There are lots of benefits for everyone taking part – whether you're a parent or caregiver, neighbour or tamariki.



Play Streets bring out our creative side

Getting us to reimagine how we use our streets during these events and how we can realise more play opportunities in our natural environment and everyday lives.



The right to play

It's the right of every tamariki to play and enjoy the outdoors, which helps with their development. Play Streets give tamariki a space to be independent and explore their own ideas without direction from adults.



Connecting with our community

Play Streets provide a perfect opportunity to get to know our neighbours, build trust and have a sense of connection through whakawhanaungatanga.



An active Aotearoa

Play Streets create a safe environment for tamariki to play, make friends, learn new skills and explore. It's not often we can turn a suburban street into a free-play area for a day that provides a great opportunity for kids to connect with their local areas.



Supporting wellbeing

Play Streets are all about connection, getting moving, enjoying the environment and having fun – all elements that have a huge impact on our physical, social and mental wellbeing for both tamariki and adults.

What is a Play Street?

Play Streets temporarily restrict vehicle traffic on quiet, local streets, so that tamariki, whānau and other residents can be active, connect, and play in their neighbourhood.

Play Streets are not a publicly promoted event. They are small, resident-led local gatherings, held on quiet neighbourhood streets during daylight hours.

Play Streets are about making connections – tamariki and rangatahi meeting others, whānau meeting other whānau, and neighbours meeting neighbours.

“

Other than seeing kids play, I loved seeing people make connections with others. There are another three houses I can [now] pop over to, to borrow an egg. ”

Christchurch resident

“

I was new to the community, and this has fast tracked my connection to the people in the street. As a single parent that is gold! My daughter feels connected with the children and we both feel safe. ”

Auckland resident

“

Our tamariki need to have more play experiences, especially in light of recent events [Cyclone Gabrielle]. Connecting with those children close to them who have had a similar experience was really valuable. ”

Hastings resident



Play Street Toolkit

This toolkit supports neighbourhoods to bring Play Streets to life. It will help you learn what a Play Street is and provides tools and resources to help you organise and hold a successful Play Street.

Waka Kotahi Play Street Guidelines

Waka Kotahi (NZ Transport Agency) also has Play Street Guidelines. Their guidance is aimed at supporting local government to develop policies and approval processes for Play Streets that are simple, safe, and cost-effective. Community members may find the Waka Kotahi guidelines helpful for understanding what's involved.

How to organise a Play Street: A step-by-step guide

1. First, work out if your street is suitable for a Play Street.

Not all streets are suitable, but generally quiet local streets such as cul-de-sacs are ideal. When considering if your street would make a great Play Street, think playful, quiet and low risk.

To run a Play Street, you will need to engage with your local council. Each council will have its own process and requirements. Find out more about this in Step 2.



Typically, a suitable Play Street will:

- be hosted on a quiet, neighbourhood street
- be in a typically low-traffic area.



A Play Street can NOT:

- be part of a bus route
- be an emergency route for emergency services
- have a main or connecting road leading onto it
- sit alongside a bigger event or be part of a commercial operation, such as food trucks or a stage with a band.

Does your street fit the criteria? If not, a Play Street might not be right for your neighbourhood. If it does, you can get started!



2. Check with your council

Check with your local council to see if they support Play Streets and their specific requirements to make your Play Street happen. You will need to complete a Play Street application and there will be Health & Safety requirements you need to know about.

Some councils aren't set up yet to enable Play Streets in their areas. If your council can't support a Play Street, contact your local 'Regional Play Systems Lead' at your Regional Sports Trust. They will be able to help you with alternative play ideas or suggest how you could approach your council about trialling a Play Street.

Find your local **Regional Sports Trusts**.

See page 6: Tips for applying for a Play Street.

3. Get your neighbours onboard

Once you're clear on council requirements and whether your street is suitable for a Play Street, it's time to build relationships with your neighbours – to let them know you'd like to hold a Play Street and get them excited and involved.

- a. For a Play Street to take place, it needs to be supported by most of the residents who live on or around the street. It's okay if one or two neighbours don't wish to take part, but all affected residents need to know that a Play Street is being planned.
- b. You will need to show the council that your neighbours support the Play Street. Each council will have their own requirements for what level of resident support they want to see.

Here's an example of a form you could use to collect signatures from your neighbours who agree to having a Play Street:

Play Street Signature Collection

See page 6: Tips to getting neighbours onboard with your Play Street.



4. Organise the date and time for your Play Street

- a. Plan ahead! Find out from your neighbours a date that would suit most people to hold the Play Street.
- b. A quiet time of day is ideal – when the movement of traffic and people is minimal, like a Sunday afternoon compared to a busy Saturday morning where there is lots of traffic as people are out and about with Saturday activities and sport.
- c. You will need to give your council a lot of lead-in time! Councils are required to notify groups like Emergency Services four weeks before a Play Street date.

5.

Apply for a Play Street based on all of the above

- a. Now that you have gathered everything you need for your Play Street to take place, apply to your local council to host your Play Street.
- b. Your council will most likely require you to complete an Application Form and a Health & Safety Plan for the Play Street. Don't worry, this isn't hard and councils have staff who can help and answer any questions.

6.

Your Play Street is approved – double check your responsibilities

- a. When your council lets you know your Play Street has been approved, it will also give you further guidance and requirements that you need to put in place. For example, you may need to put up signs up at the entrance(s) to the Play Street, have marshals available to greet people and manage any vehicles, and signals for clearly starting and ending the play session. It's really important to follow these requirements.
- b. As the Play Street organiser, make sure you understand what your responsibilities are. The council will let you know what these are and they should be included in the application process. If you are unsure, please ask your council to clarify.

See page 7: A note about managing traffic.

7.

Send invites to your neighbours and organise activities

- a. Once all your Play Street requirements are in place, it's time to invite your neighbours and start planning activities.
- b. Planning play activities can be as easy as seeing what play gear your neighbours can bring along for everyone to use. Or you could connect with your local Regional Sports Trust, council, board or local retailer to see if they can support you with play gear or activities on the day.
- c. Keep your activities as simple and sustainable as possible.
- d. You're now ready to have your Play Street – enjoy!

See page 7: Activity ideas for Play Streets.





Tips on applying for a Play Street

Each council will have different requirements for hosting a Play Street. That's why we recommend the first thing you do when thinking of hosting a Play Street is to check how your local council supports and enables Play Streets, and their requirements to make one happen.

Check your council website – some councils include Play Street information and what they are looking for in applications – or get in contact via phone or email. Some councils may allow you to make one application for several Play Streets over the year.

Make sure you apply at least 60 days in advance of your proposed Play Street date, to allow the council the time it needs to process and action your application.

If you have followed the step-by-step guide, you should have everything you need to fill in your application, which will include:

1. The date and time you wish to host your Play Street
2. The exact location of your Play Street
3. Example of activities you will have on the day
4. Proof of engagement and approval from neighbours. Check the application process for when this is required. It may not be until later in the process rather than upfront.

Tips for getting neighbours onboard with your Play Street

As you will have read earlier in the toolkit, you will need to ensure that most of your neighbourhood is happy to have a Play Street.

When applying to your council to host a Play Street, you will be asked for proof that you have collected approval from the residents of your street.

Each council will let you know how it would like you to show that you have sufficient neighbourhood support, but some ways to show neighbourhood support are:

- A document containing your neighbours' signatures
- A screen short of your street's Facebook Group showing neighbours' agreement.

Your neighbours may need first to learn more about what a Play Street is and what setting one up involves. If you feel shy about approaching your neighbours, you could start by printing off flyers and doing a letterbox drop. If your street has an email list or Facebook Group, you could also post a notice there.

Planning a Play Street is the perfect way to get to know your neighbours! Find a friend or neighbour you could partner with to get things going.

Here's an example flyer to get you started:

Let's have a Play Street!



Activity ideas for Play Streets

There are lots of play activities you can have at your Play Street. We recommend you keep them simple and sustainable (but also super fun!). Try to avoid items that you can't recycle, use again, or will have to be thrown away at the end of the Play Street. Here are some ideas that have worked for others:

- Hopscotch (you'll need chalk and a stone or marker)
- Skipping ropes
- Hula Hoops
- Mini soccer set up
- 'Backyard cricket' with a tennis ball
- Rollerblading
- Scootering
- Bike riding
- Bubble mixture
- Buckets of water and sponges, water guns
- Messy play or sensory play buckets (sensory play buckets are awesome hands-on tools for children to explore multiple senses, including sight, sound, touch, and smell. Fill buckets or containers with sand, birdseed, water, play dough, cotton wool, or other suitable fillers)
- Mats for sitting and playing on – include children's books for a quiet space
- Lego
- Basketball (with a portable hoop).

A note about managing traffic

While traffic will be restricted during your Play Street, a Play Street needs a process for safely managing any vehicles that may need to access the area while the Play Session is happening. It's important that emergency services can still access the area if required, and councils may choose to allow delivery vehicles and resident vehicles access as well.

But, as your Play Street will have met the approval criteria and residents will know about it in advance, then there shouldn't be many vehicles needing to access the area.

Managing vehicles is usually quite simple, and typically involves having cones and marshals at key locations. Make sure you check in with your council to understand what they require. Councils can sometimes supply road cones or suggest other ways of marking the road.

Please check [**Waka Kotahi Guidelines**](#) for restricting traffic for Play Street event.



Collecting feedback on the day

To help Play Streets continue to become regular and successful events it is really useful to find out how people attending a Play Street found the experience. That way, we can look to improve or change the way we do things for future Play Streets. Feedback and observations are also helpful when reflecting on the event, and for those who want to celebrate and tell the story of their Play Street.

A good approach for gathering feedback is to have one of your neighbours volunteer to be responsible for talking to whānau and tamariki about how they are finding the Play Street, and to keep a record of the information they collect.

It's best to keep the feedback anonymous. If you want to add names alongside any feedback, you will need to get the person's permission first and let them know who will see their information and what you are planning to do with it. (Find out more about collecting and keeping personal information at Office of the Privacy Commissioner | [Your privacy responsibilities](#).)

It's also important to capture any incidents or things that didn't go well. You can let your council know about these afterwards.

Keep in mind that Play Streets are relaxed, low-key, fun events so keep your feedback processes simple. Here are some ideas on ways for gathering feedback:

Observation checklist

One method for capturing what is happening on the day is an observation checklist. This is an easy tool to use, by simply roaming the event and ticking all the relevant things you are observing from a distance. In a longer event, you may want to do more than one observation.

Example Play Street Observation Checklist



Feedback survey

A traditional, anonymous feedback survey of between 5-10 questions is a simple tool for Play Street participants to fill in on the event day or after the event. Print off a survey form (like the one following) to hand out at the Play Street. Make sure you have pens and pencils handy and a box to put the completed forms in.

Councils will find your survey responses helpful, especially where they can collate data from several Play Streets over time.

Example Play Streets Feedback Survey

Other ways to capture how people feel about the day

Try these ways for getting feedback on your Play Street:

- Ask tamariki to draw their favourite thing about the day.
- Write down stories or quotes from neighbours on the day.
- Ask parents about their favourite play memories from their own childhood and capture their stories.
- Capture voices and fun activities on video. You should first get permission from participants before you film them, and check that parents and caregivers are happy for you to film tamariki. Let them know where you will post the video.
- Ask people to post their favourite part of the Play Street on social media afterwards.

Post-event reflection

It's worthwhile to tell the story of your Play Street successes and learning along the way. By capturing information from a wide range of perspectives, you can create an interesting and engaging picture about the impact your Play Street had.

Remember, it is not just about the number of people who attended a Play Street, but the voices and experiences of all those involved throughout the process.

Check back in with your Regional Play System Lead at your Regional Sports Trust to let them know how your Play Street went and the impact on your neighbourhood. They would be happy to hear your stories and to share them with Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa.

Councils may be able to check in with your neighbourhood at a later date to observe any changes that may have resulted from the Play Street gathering. Changes over time might show how a community has improved its confidence, connections, capacity or capabilities, or perhaps how Play Streets has inspired more community-led or informal play or activities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why can't tamariki just play at the park?

While parents/caregivers are encouraged to give tamariki regular opportunities to play outside, including going to the park, we have seen in recent research:

- there is fear of young people going to the park alone
- younger children need adult supervision
- parents need to make the time to take tamariki to the park, and have conflicting priorities.

A Play Street not only promotes play, it also promotes neighbourhood connection and community resilience. It provides an opportunity for neighbours to meet each other, including people who may live alone, or those who are less likely to find it easy or suitable to play in a park.

For more on this, check out this post from [Playing Out](#).

Are we teaching children that they can play on the street anytime?

'Playing Out UK' research showed that young children can understand the difference between an event with a road closure and normal circumstance, through for example seeing road cones and adults wearing high-vis vests.

A Play Street is an opportunity for parents to talk to children about road safety and the danger of traffic, and an opportunity for adults to take responsibility of driving behaviours on neighbourhood streets.

What is the point of difference from a Play Street and a pop-up play at the local park event

A Play Street:

- Majority of people who attend will live on the street. Residents may include parents, children, elderly, people who live alone or no children.
- It is not a publicly promoted event
- It is held outside people's houses
- Some sort of traffic restriction will be required.

Play event at local park:

- Mix of people who live in the community but likely to be mainly families including grandparents.
- Some families might be travelling from outside the neighbourhood
- Promoted via social media channels, newspapers etc, school or preschool community.

I don't have children, why would I want to take part?

You don't need children to take part. A Play Street is an opportunity to catch up or meet new neighbours on the street. This could be an opportunity to get involved and be a marshal or just relax, enjoy the atmosphere, or share your own play memories with neighbours.

What if a resident doesn't agree to a Play Street?

It is their choice about engaging with the Play Street. Councils may set a benchmark for how many residents need to support the Play Street before it can go ahead (for example, 80%).

If a resident doesn't want to engage in the Play Street, they could:

- stay inside at home
- make plans to be away for the duration of the Play Street
- still leave and come back to their street, understanding their car will be guided through the restriction area
- move their car outside of the restriction area before the Play Street begins, so they can go about their business.

What if residents are concerned about damage to cars or property?

To alleviate any concerns, ensure residents are reminded about the time and date of the Play Street so they can ensure their cars are put in their garages or parked further away from the Play Street.

Carefully consider the types of play activities being provided. For example, for street cricket use a tennis ball instead of a hard ball.

What if there is an emergency at a resident's house or they are having food delivered?

Emergency services will have access during a Play Street. A process will be in place for marshals to safely guide the emergency vehicle through the play area.

Visitors or delivery people are recommended to walk into the street from outside the Play Street closure area. There will be some situations where they will be able to drive up, once play is cleared.

Where can I find technical guidance on traffic management?

[Waka Kotahi's Play Street Guidelines](#) provide technical guidance for councils on traffic management processes and policies to support Play Streets.



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