# Defining Play

**Outdoor Play** is play that takes place outside and includes concepts of risky play and nature play. Outdoor play is the umbrella term that assumes the above definition of play and takes place in a very broad continuum of spaces that include urban, rural, suburban, and wilderness settings.

**Active Play** is play that includes light, moderate, and/or vigorous physical activity.

**Unstructured Play** is play that is not initiated in an organized, planned or formal way. It emphasizes self-directed, emergent aspects of play and is not externally directed by adults. It is aligned, but distinct from play-based learning, which uses play concepts for educator-directed learning (see definition below). It is important to note that play often becomes more structured when children are given time and repeated experiences in the same space.

**Risky Play** is thrilling and exciting forms of play that involve uncertainty and a risk of physical injury. Risky play provides opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about injury risk. Risky play is subjective and changes for each child.

Risky play can be categorized as: 1. play with great heights, 2. play with high speed, 3. play with dangerous tools, 4. play near dangerous elements, 5. rough-and-tumble play, and 6. play where the children can “disappear”/get lost.

# Risk versus Hazard – Definitions

**Risk** are the possibility of gaining or losing something of value, with an intentional interaction with uncertainty and probability. Risk is subjective and can vary from person to person.

**Hazard** is a potential source of harm or danger. **Hazards** are a source of harm that is obvious (e.g.: walking on the railing of a bridge) or not obvious. **Hazards can be mitigated or avoided.** When a hazard exists the potential for injury is hidden, or where the child does not have the competence to manage the hazard, or where there is no obvious benefit to the child in experiencing the hazard (e.g.: broken railing, fast moving current in a river).

**Harm** is injury, hurt or damage inflicted on a human, object or **environment.**

**Danger** is the possibility of suffering harm or injury.

# Safety and Risk-Benefit - Defined

**Safety** is a state in which dangers and conditions that could cause physical, psychological or material harm are controlled in a manner to preserve the health and well-being of individuals and the community.

Safe or safety are perhaps the most commonly encountered terms in debates about children and risk. e.g.: ‘Is this playground, park, tree, public space safe?’ It is important to understand that the word ‘safe’ can mean different things to different people.

**Risk management** is a systemic rational approach to managing uncertainty within an operating environment.

**Risk Benefit** is a part of a risk assessment method in which an evaluation of the potential benefits to children and others. Play and social value are considered alongside the potential risks associated with the provision. It allows providers to satisfy legal obligations, while promoting a balanced approach.

**Risk Benefit Analysis** is a process where the practitioner or program weighs, with equal consideration, the duty to protect children from avoidable, serious harm and the duty to provide them with valuable play opportunities.

**Risk Benefit Assessment** is a practical process and tool for making judgements about the risks and benefits associated with an activity and play space. It includes the control measures that are required to manage the risks while securing the benefits. It assumes that caregivers in the place of play are trained and entrusted with the capacity to make judgements.