



Section Nine PROMOTING YOUR PLAYGROUP

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How to Promote Your Playgroup

If your playgroup is a source of enjoyment for you and your child and has helped you feel part of a caring community you will want it to involve others who need the support that playgroups give.

There may be many families with young children who feel isolated in your community and do not know about playgroups and the friendships they provide. By publicising your group these families and the general community will be made aware of the valuable support playgroups offer.

If you have room for more families or can start a new session, the following actions may help.

How to attract new members

Join Playgroup SA

When you join Playgroup SA, you are automatically placed on our database. This way, families enquiring about playgroups in your area can be directed to your playgroup.

If your information changes (ie session days, contact details, etc), let Playgroup SA know immediately so that we can update our database listing for your playgroup.

Word of mouth

Most families join a playgroup because a friend invited them.

Chat to your friends and relatives. Send playgroup information to your networks via email, text message or social network sites. Contact recommended families. Carry playgroup information with you and pass it on to parents with young children you meet while shopping, at kindergarten pick up or wherever you go in your local area.

Posters

Make a poster about your playgroup and display it at local meeting places. Advertise on community boards at local libraries, banks, local shops, shopping centres, Child and Youth Health Centres, neighbourhood houses or doctors' surgeries. Make use of immunisation days. See 'How to make a poster' or contact Playgroup SA for a modifiable template or

custom poster.

Brochures

Make a brochure that is a smaller version of the poster with more details added. Contact Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882 to find out how we can assist your brochure development (or we can provide you with a pre-designed template to modify).

Have a pram walk and drop brochures in letterboxes. Carry some with you for people you meet. Leave them at places in your community where families with young children frequently visit, such as Child and Youth Health Centres, doctors' surgeries, hairdressers, pharmacies, swim centres, etc.

Signage

Put a simple 'PLAYGROUP' sign with a phone and email contact on a fence, wall or noticeboard where you meet. Be sure you provide a mobile number as busy playgroup families are often hard to reach. You may be able to have a sandwich board outside your building while your playgroup is in session.

Open day

Plan carefully and advertise widely. Send out personalised invitations. Invite the local media. Be sure the session is well organised with simple play experiences and that visitors are warmly welcomed. Aim to make the session so much fun that families want to return.

Local newspapers

National Playgroup Week is a great time to focus on promoting your playgroup. Search online to find contacts at your local newspapers. Invite the media to attend your playgroup or special event.

Most local newspapers have a free column for community groups to advertise. You will usually find a contact number for this service at the end of the column. Paid advertising may be an investment worth considering if you need more members.

Local newsletters

Ask if you can include playgroup information in newsletters produced by local schools, kindergartens, churches, neighbourhood houses and Playgroup SA. Keep the information concise or according to the space allocated. Briefly explain where, when and why your playgroup meets. Be sure to include contact

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details.

Council listings

Contact your local council and ask to be included on their website and in their next community handbook. Update your information each year.

Local media

Contact any local community radio or television stations to ask how they can promote your playgroup. See 'Getting Publicity' further on in this section.

Professionals and other groups

Ask for help from your local Child and Youth Health nurse, children's librarian, school principal or kindergarten teacher. People working with families are often happy to help or suggest ways of promoting playgroup. Talk about playgroups with local coordinators from the Australian Breastfeeding Association, Multiple Birth Association, sole parents and other family service groups.

Website and/or Social Media

Set up your own website and/or social media page (facebook, twitter, etc). If you are part of a neighbourhood house, church or other organisation ask if you can list your playgroup on their website.

Welcome new families

Make sure the first experience a new family has with your playgroup is warm and welcoming. See section on 'Welcoming Strategies'.

Child and Youth Health talks to new parents

Child and Youth Health run programs for new parents of babies from approximately 10 weeks of age. At the end of these programs, families often want to continue meeting together and becoming/joining a playgroup is the next step.

If the new parents group joins your playgroup as another session your playgroup is made stronger and more viable.

To talk to a new parent group:

- Telephone your local Child and Youth Health Centre.
- Ask if you can come present to the new parent groups; preferably at the last meeting when they are considering options to stay together.
- Talk to the group and offer them a session at your playgroup; explain they may need to accept other families.
- Leave information about your playgroup at the centre.

If you have a good relationship with your local Child and Youth Health nurse he/she may refer families to your playgroup directly.

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Posters/Pamphlets/Logos

Make a poster

- Community noticeboards usually have limited space available so make a poster of a reasonable size, such as A4 (210 x 297mm) or A5 (148 x 210mm).
- Keep information to a minimum.
- Have the word PLAYGROUP in large bold letters.
- Keep writing inside a border.
- Add some colour, but avoid yellow printing as it is hard to read from a distance.
- Have a child's drawing to add interest and appeal.
- Draw attention by adding images of playgroup activities.

Example:



Make a brochure

Design a simple brochure to give to new families or attract new members to your group and/or provide information about the playgroup.

Keep it simple so it can be photocopied. Include:

- playgroup name
- ages of children
- what a playgroup is
- where and when you meet
- contact person
- what happens at playgroup
- what to bring
- term dates
- fees
- your playgroup's basic guidelines and philosophy and/or schedule of events and activities/themes.

Be careful not to use pictures that infringe copyright.

Keep your brochure on a disc or memory stick and update at the beginning of each year or when changes are required.

Playgroup logo

Make your playgroup stand out. Develop a logo and use it on your letterhead. A good logo can have many uses – on cards, signs and t-shirts. A graphic artist usually designs logos and will work within your budget. Ask a local printer for contacts.

Member of Playgroup SA logo

Playgroup SA's logo is not to be used without prior consent from Playgroup SA.

National Playgroup Week

During National Playgroup Week groups around Australia let people know why they go to playgroup. As a Playgroup Australia initiative, playgroups are encouraged to create their own original event during National Playgroup Week to advertise throughout their community or in their local papers.

Lots of people don't know or understand what goes on at a playgroup or that there is a playgroup close by. This is a chance to show what your playgroup offers and invite families to come and join in the fun.

Here are some of the innovative events playgroups have found successful:

- open day
- teddy bears picnic
- autumn day
- street stall
- picnic or pram stroll in the park
- train or bus ride
- Australiana day
- playgroup party
- multicultural day
- local library activity day
- farm visit
- friends' and relatives' day
- shopping centre display
- fun play day
- regional playgroup picnic
- bring a friend day.

Planning your promotion

Before the event

Decide as a group what you will do and when, where and how you will do it. Keep focused on why you are holding the event to help in making decisions.

Get everyone involved and value everyone's input. Keep everyone well informed as organisation of the event progresses.

Discuss:

- using community facilities – parks, shopping centres, local buildings
- keeping activities simple
- preparing and keeping to an affordable budget
- personally inviting community leaders, media and special guests
- confirming entertainers and venues in writing
- advertising possibilities
- having a wet weather contingency plan
- documenting everything to assist in planning future events
- conducting a safety check of area
- having First Aid on hand.

After the event

- Follow-up all contacts made.
- Discuss what went well and what didn't.
- Enjoy your success and learn from what may not have worked well.
- Complete documentation, including all financial transactions.
- Write thank you letters.
- Put all pictures taken and published newspaper articles on the playgroup noticeboard.

Let other playgroups know of your achievements by emailing press clippings, photos and details to the Communications Coordinator at publications@playgroupsa.com.au or send to Playgroup SA, 91 Prospect Road, Prospect, SA 5082.

Shopping Centre Displays

A display in your local shopping centre is a good way to let the local community know about your playgroup.

Playgroup shopping centre displays can be set up for:

- a playgroup membership drive
- your playgroup's anniversary
- National Playgroup Week each year
- promoting the value of playgroup in your local community
- local festivals or community celebrations.

Don't forget to contact Playgroup SA to request insurance information specific to your planned event.

Step 1

Discuss the idea of a shopping centre display as a group. Make sure there is enough commitment to do the promotion successfully. Appoint a promotion coordinator. Invite other local playgroups to be involved to help you promote playgroup and share the workload.

Step 2

Contact the shopping centre's management and ask if you can set up a display to promote playgroups. Ask what dates are available and if the display needs to be staffed. If you are not successful, ask some store managers if you can have a small display in their chemist, toy store or supermarket.

Step 3

Make firm plans with the shopping centre management. Agree on dates and times. You may need to sign a contract drawn up by centre management. If your display is over several days, ask where you can store your equipment overnight.

Step 4

Meet and decide as a group:

- what to set up, what equipment is necessary, who will provide it and who will deliver it to the display
- what information you will hand out
- who will staff the stall – at least two people required for up to two hours at a time
- if you will provide any activities and if so, what will they be.

Step 5

Find out what Centre Management can supply to help you. Respond to any requests they make for written submissions or plans. Check they are happy with any play activities you intend to provide.

Step 6

On the day:

- set up chairs, tables, banners and play activities
- approach passing shoppers and ask if they are interested in playgroups
- talk to parents while their children are playing
- distribute playgroup information
- run a competition for people requesting information
- record names and contact details of interested people and follow up after the event.

Play activities ideas

Simple activities could include threading, drawing, tunnels, cubby, puzzles, playdough, music, dress-ups, baby toys or anything your playgroup children love to do. Call Playgroup SA for more information about activity ideas and keep up-to-date with Playgroup SA publications as they contain new ideas and suggestions within every edition.

Things to consider

- Barriers around the play area if there are steps, stairs or doors to the street
- Signs about supervision eg "Parents, please take responsibility for your child" or "Please supervise your child at all times".
- A banner or display some images of your playgroup.

How Playgroup SA can help

Call Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882 or email info@playgroupsa.com.au for playgroup brochures, membership information booklets and posters. Simply let us know what you want and how many you need.

Getting Publicity

Media relations

Using media is one of the most important ways your playgroup can raise its profile.

Local publicity

Getting publicity in your local newspapers is easier than you think. Local newspapers are about local news and what better than a story about a local playgroup.

Email a few lines to your local newspaper's community column stating your playgroup name, where and when you meet, a contact phone number and that new families are welcome. Call to find out who to send your item to and if you should mark it 'community column' or something else. The newspaper will not keep your item on file so you will need to resubmit it each time you want it to appear.

To be offered more space, you will need to provide the newspaper with a photo opportunity.

Try something unusual like spots and stripes, messy play, adult sack races or performing grandparents. Photographers are more likely to attend if there is something visually interesting for them to capture. Think about this before you make contact with the newspaper.

Steps to successful local publicity

1. Think about what would make a good photo opportunity. Getting a photograph of your playgroup published will attract more attention than words only. If you need pre-publicity think about how you can mock up a photo opportunity. Would preparations for the day make a good photograph, eg children making a mural?
2. Find out the name of the senior journalists at your local newspapers and call them about three weeks before you want something to appear. Be enthusiastic! Tell them about your event and ask if a photographer can come along. Ask if they would like you to send details.
3. If they are interested, send brief details outlining what, where and when your event is and if applicable, the purpose of the event. Supply one contact name and a business hours phone number in case more information is needed. Send

these details immediately after you have made contact.

4. Confirm the photographer is to attend one week prior to the event.
5. Make sure someone is on hand to greet the photographer and offer assistance.
6. If a photographer does not attend, try again next time.
7. Regularly submit brief details about your playgroup to the newspaper's community columns.
8. If possible, always give your story to more than one local newspaper to increase your chances of getting a run.

Public service announcements

Non-profit organisations can use free radio and television airtime for public service announcements.

Tips for public service announcements:

- Try to match the quality of (competing) professional advertisements.
- Make sure the area/s covered by a particular station will reach your target audience.
- Investigate which public service announcement time is available on local stations and their preferred format for releases.
- Make short, concise announcements.
- Contain only one message in your announcement.
- Always thank the station for airing your public service announcement.

Checklist

Playgroups are about friends having fun together. Rate your playgroup in promoting this message and helping families find a playgroup to join.

- There is a sign at your venue advertising that a playgroup meets there.
- You have a brochure about your playgroup for members to hand out.
- You have contacted Playgroup SA for a promotional pack of brochures, posters and other relevant resources.
- Members are encouraged to bring a friend to playgroup.
- You have contacted your local paper to ask for coverage.
- You have submitted your playgroup listing to the 'What's On' or 'community column' of your local paper.
- You have considered advertising your playgroup on community radio or regional TV.
- You have a system to welcome families on their first day.
- You have considered holding an open day for families to find out more about your playgroup.
- You promote your playgroup during National Playgroup Week.
- Posters about your playgroup are on local community noticeboards.
- Members are encouraged to put a State of Play magazine, playgroup poster or brochure at local Child and Youth Health Centres, doctors, dentists, hairdressers or in other waiting rooms.
- You have considered a letterbox drop to families in your area.
- Your playgroup has considered setting up a display at any of the following:
 - shopping centre
 - local library
 - local festival
 - council fun day.
- Your playgroup has invited a celebrity or local dignitary, ie mayor or councillors, to have morning tea at your playgroup to draw attention from the local media.

