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How to Start & Maintain a Playgroup

Playgroups are free to organize to best meet the needs of its members. Use this as a guide but feel free to make changes along the way to better suit your group.

1. Choose a Playgroup Coordinator

Designate a Playgroup Coordinator. This person will be the first contact for new members, foster the playgroup’s development, communicate between the group and the BMA board, and attend an annual meeting for all playgroup coordinators. This doesn’t have to be a permanent position and can change to meet the needs of the group and the individual.

1. Create A Directory and Organize A Way To Communicate

Creating a directory using a sharing site like Google Docs works well so members can edit their information at any time. Playgroup members decide how much information they’d like to share with each other, but the typical directory looks like this:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| First Name | Last Name | Address | Phone | Spouse | Child Name | Child DOB |
| Jane | Doe | 1234 W St. KC, MO 64113 | 816-123-4567 | John | Sally | 11/12/13 |

As new members join the group, the Playgroup Coordinator will add them to all the documents and communication outlets.

The first communication will most likely be done in email which works well for sharing documents and organizing the first play date. Options for ongoing communication:

1. Create a private Facebook group. This make sharing photos and articles easy, and also lets the members get to know each other more intimately
2. Use a phone app called GroupMe. This app allows a real-time running dialogue where you can share photos, organize impromptu play dates and chat. It also has a built-in calendar so the playdate host can create an event and track RSVPs. It is similar to a group text but has more functionality and works better for large groups.
3. Start Meeting Up!

Set up a day and time of the week. Typically playgroups meet one day per week for approximately 2 hours. Think of nap or preschool schedules when planning a time, and change the time as needed to accommodate most members.

The Playgroup Coordinator should start a document with dates for the next 2-3 months and ask each member to sign up to host. Google Docs works really well for this as well. Here is an example:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Host | Location |
| Wednesday October 10th |  |  |
| Wednesday October 17th | Jane | Arno Park : corner of Ward Pkwy & Arno Rd |
| Wednesday October 24th |  |  |

It is the host’s responsibility to communicate the locale for their chosen week. If they are unexpectedly unable to host, they should communicate that to the group so other members can plan accordingly.

Members are welcome to host in their own home or designate a local play area. Some options for playdates are:

Parks and splash parks (Loose Park, Franklin Park, etc.), Coffee shops, Library (Plaza library baby bounce and story time), Union Station (including the model train experience), Crown Center (including the children’s exhibit), Sea Life/Legoland, Deanna Rose Children’s Farmstead, Kansas City Zoo, Gymboree and other children’s gyms, Seasonal events (apple orchards, pumpkin patches, Easter egg hunts, etc.), and indoor gyms (Sylvester Powell, Matt Ross, etc.).

1. Watch your group grow and thrive!

BMA playgroups usually grow fast once they are listed on the roster and start meeting regularly. If the group is getting so large that it has trouble fitting into homes, the Playgroup Coordinator has the option to close the group to new members. It can always be re-opened if attendance is low or members have moved away. Please let the **Playgroup Chair** know if a group has closed.

A great way to foster relationships among playgroup members is to get-together without the children! A periodic happy hour, movie night, dinner or activity will both strengthen bonds as well as provide much-needed adult interaction!

Other Notes

Play Group Etiquette

Allergies: Since little ones often share their snacks with others, ask that members be mindful of food allergies (if needed). Some playgroups choose to have the host mom supply snacks for everyone and some choose to have each member bring something for themselves. If you are hosting in your home, let other members know if you have pets.

Illness: If a child is sick with a fever/diarrhea/vomiting, it is recommended that he/she skip playgroup until he/she is well.