

FOR THE ADVOCATE

MAKE YOUR CASE FOR PLAY IN THREE MINUTES



A 3-MINUTE PLAYBOOK FOR ADVOCATING FOR SAFE, RELIABLE ACCESS TO PLACES TO PLAY IN 8 EASY STEPS

Speaking before a City Council or School Board can feel intimidating. You may only have a few minutes. You may be speaking to people with different priorities, different opinions, and different levels of familiarity with the issue.

1. BEFORE YOU SPEAK

You may only get two or three minutes. The comments that land are not the ones with the most statistics. They are the ones with the clearest message.

This guide is for meetings where a city council, school board or parks commission is deciding whether to ban, restrict or replace artificial turf, or to close or convert a field. Your goal is not to win an argument. It is to help decision-makers see what the decision means for the children who use the field.

TWO STEPS BEFORE YOU GO:

1. Learn what the decision-maker cares about.

Their website and social feeds will tell you, if they don't have a strong stance, you have more opportunity for education.

2. Choose one message and one request.

By focusing on a single objective and request you create a stronger response opportunity.

2. THE FOUR-PART FORMULA

1. Start with the human impact. Who is affected?

2. State the big idea. A field is never just a field.

3. Ask the key question. Who loses access, and what realistic alternative will they have?

4. Make one request. Choose one:

- Before any ban or closure, review how many children, schools and leagues use each field, and whether realistic replacement hours exist.
- Require an equity and field-capacity analysis before eliminating a surface option or converting a high-use field.
- If artificial turf is approved, require strong standards: no intentionally added PFAS with third-party verification, no crumb-rubber infill, heat protocols, and an end-of-life plan.

MAKE YOUR CASE FOR PLAY IN THREE MINUTES (CONTINUED)



3. SAMPLE TWO-MINUTE COMMENT

Good evening, and thank you for letting me speak.

I'm here because I believe every child deserves a safe, reliable place to play. **[Add one sentence about your connection to this field.]**

Tonight's decision is about more than a surface. For a child, a field is where they exercise, make friends, build confidence, and belong.

The CDC says children need at least 60 minutes of activity a day. But children can't play on a recommendation. They need somewhere to play.

I understand the appeal of natural grass, and where it can carry the demand, it is a good choice. The question is whether this field can stay open for the hours our community needs. Grass wears down with heavy use and closes after rain. In the analyses I've read, synthetic fields logged roughly two to three times the hours of use of grass fields. So before we decide, I ask you to look at this field's own records: hours used, rain closures, canceled practices, and what it would take to replace those hours.

And please ask who loses access. Some families can drive across town or pay for private programs. Others can't. A replacement on paper is not always a replacement in real life.

If we approve turf, let's require strong standards: tested, verified, with a plan for the end of its life.

Please measure this decision by whether children in this community keep a real place to play. Thank you.



REMEMBER:

Lead with people, not policy.

Decision-makers hear policies every day.
They remember people.

MAKE YOUR CASE FOR PLAY IN THREE MINUTES *(CONTINUED)*



4. FIVE MESSAGES (PICK ONE)

A FIELD IS NEVER JUST A FIELD.

To an adult it may look like infrastructure. To a child it may be where they exercise, make friends and belong. The point is participation, not elite sport.

- "This isn't about creating professional athletes. It's about giving ordinary children ordinary opportunities to move."
- "The field is the infrastructure. The opportunity is the outcome."

ACCESS TO PLAY IS ACCESS TO HEALTH AND LEARNING.

The CDC says children 6 to 17 need at least 60 minutes of activity a day, and that activity improves attention and memory and reduces risk of depression, type 2 diabetes and obesity. CDC data also show students with higher grades are more likely to be active and to play on a sports team. The CDC says this does not show activity causes better grades.

- "A recommendation to be active is not the same as access to being active."
- "Healthy, active children are better positioned to learn."
- Don't say: "Sports give kids better grades." The research doesn't support it.

NOT EVERY FAMILY HAS ANOTHER OPTION.

Some families have a car, a club membership or a flexible schedule. Others don't. The CDC finds that the closer people live to a park, the more likely they are to use it. A replacement counts only if it is close enough to reach, affordable, open when children need it, reachable without a car, and open to local schools and youth groups.

- "A field across town doesn't necessarily replace a field in the neighborhood."
- "An alternative is only an alternative if families can realistically use it."

WHY NOT JUST GRASS?

Grass is a good surface, and where it can carry the demand, it should be used. University extension guidance puts sustained good conditions at about 200 or fewer hours of use a year, with significant wear beginning around 800 to 1,000 hours, and wet soil makes damage worse. In the analyses we reviewed, synthetic fields logged roughly two to three times the hours of use. Neither surface is the answer everywhere, so ask for the field's own records.

- "Grass is a great surface. The question is whether this field can be open when children need it."
- "Where grass can carry the load, use grass. Where it can't, let's talk about what would replace those hours."

ASK WHO LOSES ACCESS.

Not everyone experiences the loss of a field the same way. Don't just ask what is being removed. Ask what children are losing: a place to exercise, a team, a coach, a safe place after school, an affordable activity.

- "The question isn't whether some children can play somewhere. It's whether every child who depends on this space will still have a realistic opportunity to participate."
- "The loss of infrastructure can become the loss of opportunity."

MAKE YOUR CASE FOR PLAY IN THREE MINUTES (CONTINUED)



5. IF YOU'RE ASKED ABOUT SAFETY

You may be asked about PFAS, heat, injuries or microplastics. These are legitimate concerns. Don't dismiss them, and don't improvise on the science. Say:

"Those are fair concerns, and they're the reason we should set strong standards: no intentionally added PFAS with third-party verification, no crumb-rubber infill, transparent testing, heat protocols, and a plan for the end of the field's life. I'd rather we set the standards than lose access."

Then return to access. Don't quote statistics you can't source.

6. QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How many children depend on this field, and how many hours does it serve today?
- What realistic alternatives will they have, and can families without reliable transportation reach them?
- What do this field's records show for hours used, rain closures and canceled practices, and what would it take to replace those hours?
- Who in our community has the fewest alternatives if this space is lost?
- Where will children play during the transition?
- How will we measure whether replacement access is working?

7. AVOID

- **Making it personal.** Instead of "You don't care about children," try "I hope we can make sure children's access stays central to this decision."
- **Going too technical.** Don't spend your time debating specifications. Return to what the decision means for access.
- **Going too broad, or only about yourself.** Pick one message. Connect your story to the community: "My child needs this field, and I know many families depend on spaces like it."

8. CLOSE

Bring the conversation back to children. Ask the question that should guide every decision:

When we change or remove a place to play, who is left without one?

ABOUT PLAYING FOR KEEPS

We raise funds to install turf fields in communities that lack safe places to play. We identify high-need sites, build partnerships with municipalities and school districts, and ensure every project is designed for lasting community benefit.

FOR THE DECISION-MAKER



MAKE YOUR PUBLIC COMMENT GO FURTHER

A 2-PAGE LEAVE BEHIND FOR POLICY-MAKERS

Remove this page before handing the leave-behind to anyone.

How to use the leave-behind

WHY LEAVE SOMETHING BEHIND

A public comment lasts two or three minutes, and the decision-makers hear many speakers. A one-page summary does what a comment can't:

- It stays after you leave. Council members and board members can read it again when they are deciding.
- It reaches people who weren't in the room. Staff, absent members and colleagues can pick it up.
- It carries the evidence you don't have time to say. The sources are printed on the sheet, so your comment can stay human and the proof is still in their hands.
- It puts the right questions on the table. The four questions on page 2 are written so a decision-maker can ask them without you.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Speak first. Use the playbook, *Speaking at a Meeting*, for your public comment.
2. Mention the sheet in your comment. For example: "I've left a one-page summary with the clerk."
3. Hand it over. Give a copy to the clerk, to each member if allowed, and to staff. Ask the clerk whether written materials can be added to the record, since rules vary by body.
4. Follow up. If an official asks for more, send *A Framework for Evidence-Based Turf Policy*.

BEFORE YOU HAND IT OVER

- Confirm what the body is actually deciding, so your request matches the agenda.
- Be ready to say where a number comes from. Sources are on the sheet, so don't add claims that aren't on it.
- Know the "If you're asked about safety" box in the playbook.
- Pick one request from the Framework and make only that one.

ABOUT PLAYING FOR KEEPS

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WHY EVERY COMMUNITY NEEDS ACCESS TO PLAY

Who loses access when a neighborhood field is closed, replaced or restricted?

A FIELD IS NEVER JUST A FIELD.

When communities decide whether to ban, restrict or replace artificial turf, the conversation turns to materials, budgets and policy. The more important question is: **what happens to the children who depend on that field?** A field is where a child exercises, makes friends, builds confidence, joins a team and belongs.

The field is the infrastructure. The opportunity is the outcome.

ACCESS TO PLAY SUPPORTS THE WHOLE CHILD.

- **Physical health:** Children 6 to 17 need at least 60 minutes of activity every day. Activity builds strong muscles and bones and reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes and obesity.
- **Mental well-being:** Activity reduces the risk of depression. Play also gives children a place to practice confidence, resilience and teamwork.
- **Learning:** Activity improves attention and memory. Students with higher grades are more likely to be active, though research does not show activity causes higher grades.
- **Community:** Friendships, mentors, teamwork, and a place to belong.

NOT EVERY FAMILY HAS ANOTHER OPTION.

Some families can drive across town, pay for a club or work a flexible schedule. Others can't. The closer people live to a park, the more likely they are to use it. A replacement is meaningful only if it is close enough to reach, affordable, open when children need it, reachable without a car, and open to local schools and youth groups.

A replacement on paper is not always a replacement in real life.

WHY NOT JUST GRASS?

Natural grass is a good surface, and where it can carry the demand, it should be used. The question is whether a field can stay open for the hours a community needs. University extension guidance puts sustained good conditions at about 200 or fewer hours of use a year, with significant wear beginning around 800 to 1,000 hours. Wet soil makes damage worse. In the analyses we reviewed, synthetic fields logged roughly two to three times the hours of use of natural grass fields. Neither surface is right everywhere. The deciding facts are local: hours used, closures and cancellations.



WHY EVERY COMMUNITY NEEDS ACCESS TO PLAY (CONTINUED)

Who loses access when a neighborhood field is closed, replaced or restricted?

WHY IT MATTERS.

Children 6 to 17 need at least 60 minutes of activity every day. Activity improves attention and memory, and lowers the risk of depression, type 2 diabetes and obesity. Students with higher grades are more likely to be active, though research does not show that activity causes better grades.

A safe place to play gives children more than exercise. On a team, they learn to lead, solve problems together, and build friendships that last. And for some, it's where they first dream big.

BEFORE MAKING A DECISION, ASK:

1. Who depends on this field, and will they have a realistic alternative?
2. Is the replacement close, affordable and open when children need it?
3. What do this field's own records show for hours used, closures and cancellations?
4. Are we protecting opportunity for every child, or only for those who can afford other options?

Don't just ask what we're removing. Ask what children are losing.

EVERY CHILD DESERVES A REALISTIC OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE.

EVERY COMMUNITY DESERVES PLACES TO GATHER.

AND EVERY DECISION ABOUT RECREATIONAL ACCESS SHOULD BEGIN WITH THE PEOPLE WHO STAND TO LOSE IT.