



Considerations for the Use of Child Safety Gates

Child safety guides are often used in both home and center based child care programs to help reduce the risk of accidental injury of children by controlling their access to areas of the building. These gates are generally intended for children between 6 months and 2 years of age. Once a child learns how to open a gate, or can climb over it, it should no longer be relied upon as a safety device. The following information is offered to aid in the selection of an appropriate gate for your location.

Types of Child Safety Gates:

Child safety gates are generally available in two types: hardware-mounted gates and pressure mounted gates.

Hardware-mounted gates are secured to the framing inside the walls of the area of installation. This type of gate provides for a more secure and permanent type of installation. Hardware-mounted gates are appropriate for indoor or outdoor areas and are best suited for areas with stairs.

Pressure-mounted gates utilize various means of pressure on opposing sides to secure their installation. They should be used only where falling isn't a hazard, such as between two rooms or in entryways. These gates are more appropriate for home-based or temporary settings and are never appropriate for use at the top of stairs.

Design:

Height - Standards require that gates are not less than 22 inches in height with a floor-to-gate distance of not less than 3 inches.

Construction - Wood surfaces should be smooth, splinter-free, and with rounded rather than squared edges. Metal and some plastics can be more durable than wood.

Slats - Safety gate slats should be vertical slats or bars less than 3 inches apart to prevent head entrapment. Gates with horizontal slats, rails or openings large enough to allow children to climb on the gate should not be used.

Hardware – Latches should be relative easy for adults but not children to use. Dual-action latches or those with a squeezing mechanism are most secure. Mounting hardware should be secured into wall studs or blocking and not anchored into wall board alone.

Safety Standards:

Gates should hold a certification from the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association ([JPMA](#)). The certification designation from the JPMA on the frame or packaging indicates that the manufacturer has met voluntary safety standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials ([ASTM](#)). The standards address a variety of safety and performance criteria, including the strength of the components, the size of the openings and the integrity of latches.

Other Recommendations:

- Manufacturer's safety recommendations for the installation and use of gates should be complied with at all times
- Adults should avoid the trip hazard of trying to climb over gates
- No gate is a substitute for careful supervision of children
- Avoid the use of accordion-style gates, gates without a top filler bar and gates with horizontal slats
- Gates should be constructed with a straight top edge and closely spaced, rigid, vertical slats or a fine mesh screen
- Hinges should be installed in a manner to protect children from finger-pinch injuries and/or with protective guards
- Do not use older model, used or donated gates
- Gates should meet all local and state licensing requirements
- Gates should never be used to block emergency egress routes required by code

More information on child safety gates is available from the [US Consumer Product Safety Commission](#)