



GGMG

GOLDEN GATE
MOTHERS GROUP®

GGMG P.O. Box 475866, San Francisco, CA 94147 www.ggm.org

Playgroup Participant Guide

Welcome to your new playgroup! Here are some things you might be wondering:

What is a playgroup?

How does a playgroup work?

How do I join a playgroup?

Where should we meet?

What is a working vs non-working playgroup?

What is BigTent and how can it help my playgroup?

Why am I not getting messages from my playgroup?

How do I leave a playgroup?

Who do I go to with questions?





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What is a playgroup?

A playgroup is a small gathering of parents and their children who get together on a regular basis for play and interaction, often meeting in each other's homes when their children are younger and eventually in a public place such as a park or designated play area when their children get older.

Extensive research indicates clear benefits to consistent playtime (usually an hour-and-a-half or two weekly) for kids and their parents. A playgroup can significantly help children develop social skills, gain independence, and build self-confidence.

It can also give you a chance to meet and learn from other parents—adding up to newfound friendships and a healthy, nurturing environment. One of the most overlooked benefits of a playgroup is that the moms have time to talk, make friends, share experiences and ideas while the children play.

How does a playgroup work?

Children and their parents usually meet once a week for approximately 1 – 2 hours. During this time, the children play together and learn invaluable social skills while the moms can talk and provide much needed support for one another. They typically meet in a public place or at a member's home. Hosting responsibilities usually rotate amongst all members. Participation by members is key in maintaining the longevity of the group.

Each playgroup will have a leader or facilitator. This leader is a member of the group but they have volunteered to take on slightly more responsibility. A leader's most important role is to make sure gatherings are scheduled each week.

There is no defined term for the position of leader; one can hold the position as long as it is working for her and the group. The most important thing is that everyone is happy with the leader and the leader is happy with the tasks at hand. Your group can choose to change its leader each year, half year or at another agreed upon time. Our only request is that you let the Playgroups Committee know when there is a new leader so we can update our contact information.

If your group does not currently have a leader, please email the Playgroups Committee and let us know: playgroups@gmg.org

How do I join a playgroup?

Go to this page <http://www.gmg.org/groups.php> and find a group you would like to join. Click on its name. You will then be taken to BigTent to complete the registration process. You can join as many groups as you would like.



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Where should we meet?

When your children are young (ie. before they're walking) it is easiest to meet in each other's homes. Be sure to divide hosting responsibility equally amongst the group so that some moms do not feel more burdened than others.

Once children begin to walk it becomes more difficult to meet in homes. Here are some other ideas:

- Playgrounds: http://www.ggmg.org/Playgrounds/playground_summary.html
- California Academy of Sciences
- Botanical Gardens at Golden Gate Park
- Bay Area Discovery Museum
- Yerba Buena Gardens
- Stow Lake at Golden Gate Park
- San Francisco Zoo
- San Francisco Public Library Story Hours
- The Randall Museum
- The Exploratorium
- The DeYoung Museum
- Crissy Field

What is a working vs non-working playgroup?

Approximately half of GGMG members are stay-at-home moms. The other half work outside the home, either part-time or full-time. We have created 'Working' playgroups for mothers who will be returning to work after their maternity leave is over. Typically these groups meet on weekdays while their babies are young but once everyone returns to work, they start meeting on weekends or in the evenings. If you plan on going back to work after your maternity leave ends, we recommend that you join a 'Working' playgroup since the moms in this group will more likely be able to support you through the unique challenges associated with working outside the home. *Please note that second-time mom groups, neighborhood-based groups and special interest groups are not based on work status. Meeting days for these groups will depend on what works best for members.

What is BigTent and how can it help my playgroup?

BigTent is the technology platform that hosts all GGMG playgroups. It also hosts our discussion forums, classified ads and a variety of other resources. You can access it by going to https://www.bigtent.com/log_in

Once you have logged in, you can easily access your playgroup in BigTent by hovering your mouse over 'My Groups' in the top left-hand corner of the page then choosing the name of your playgroup. To access your playgroup's discussion forum, click on the 'forums' tab at the top of the page. To view your playgroup's calendar, click on the 'events' tab.



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It is best to use BigTent to organize events and communicate with the group so that any new members will be able to quickly get up to speed on current events.

Why am I not getting messages from my playgroup?

Make sure your email settings in BigTent are correct by going to 'Settings' then 'Email Options'. Find the name of this playgroup and look to the right to see how you will be notified of new messages. We recommend setting it to 'Email every message and comment' to be sure you are aware of what's going on with your playgroup. To change this setting, click on the box to the left of your playgroup's name then go to the drop-down box at the bottom of the page called 'Change notification to' and choose the option you'd like. Remember to click SAVE when you're done.

How do I leave a playgroup?

If you are finding that your playgroup is just not right for you, you can choose to leave at any time. To do so, login to BigTent (https://www.bigtent.com/log_in) and go to 'Settings'. In the left-hand column choose 'Membership Info'. You will then be presented with a list of groups you belong to. Find the group you would like to leave and click 'Leave group'. You might also want to send a note to your playgroup leader letting them know you have decided to leave the group.

Who do I go to with questions?

Your playgroup leader should be your primary contact for questions related to that particular group. For general questions about GGMG Playgroups, you can contact the Playgroups Committee at playgroups@ggmg.org