Ruoholahti Playground – Teacher's Guide to the Audio Episode

The Ruoholahti Playground audio episode (English version) introduces Helsinki's first computer-themed playground — a unique public space where children learn about computers, programming, and problem-solving through physical play. In this episode, author and designer Linda Liukas shares the story of how the playground was imagined, planned, and built together with the City of Helsinki, architects, and local residents. The episode also explores how technology and play come together in the playground's design — and what children themselves think about this new kind of learning environment.

How to Get Started?

This audio episode is designed to be listened to in the classroom before your visit to Ruoholahti Playground. It introduces the story of the playground from an urban planning and design perspective and helps students understand how public spaces are created.

Before listening, set clear goals with your students: What is this episode about? What should they pay attention to? Encourage them to take notes on key ideas, people involved, or anything they find interesting or surprising.

After listening, discuss the episode together. You can use the worksheet questions to guide the conversation or let students reflect in small groups. During the playground visit, students will explore the equipment, look for technology-inspired design elements, and complete observation tasks. After the visit, return to the classroom to reflect, compare experiences, and discuss technology, play, and creativity in everyday environments.

1. Pre-visit (Classroom)
Goal: Learn about city planning & technology in public spaces.

Introduce the Ruoholahti computer-themed playground. Set listening goal: How was the playground designed? Play the audio episode (about 15 minutes). Students take notes.

Questions to discuss (or use worksheet):

· How long did the design take?
· Who was involved?
· How could people participate?

Mini Research Task: How can young people influence decisions in their city? (Youth councils, participatory budgeting, suggestion websites, etc.)

2. During visit (Playground)
Goal: Explore the playground and link technology & play.

Tasks:

· Find 2 special themed equipment.
· Scan a QR code, learn something new.
· Compare physical play vs digital play.

3. Post-visit (Classroom)
Goal: Reflect & compare digital vs physical experiences.

Discussion Questions:

· What did you learn?
· What makes playing on a computer-different from a playground?
· How are kids users vs creators?

Creative Task:
Pick your favourite place in the city-How could it be a learning place?

More info & materials:

"How Helsinki's First Themed Playground Was Created" – English audio (~15 min). Finnish 4-episode series available at:

www.helsinkikanava.fi/en/podcasts/313857713

Materials needed:
· Audio episode (12 minutes)
· Student worksheet
· Pens and paper
· Device for listening to the podcast in classroom or outdoors, for example a porable speaker
· Device for scanning QR codes
· Outdoor clothes

Duration
· 2 lessons + playground visit

Curriculum Connections:
· Listening skills
· Summarising and analysis
· Discussion and teamwork skills
· Urban planning
· Technology skills
· Design education

Ruoholahti Playground - Student Worksheet

Before the Visit (Listening Task)

Listen to the audio episode about Ruoholahti Playground. Write short answers based on what you hear.

1. Who helped design the playground? (List 2 people or groups)

2. Why did they want to create a computer-themed playground?

3. How could local people and kids give their ideas?

4. How long did the planning and building take?

During the Visit (Exploring the Playground)

Work in small groups. Look around the playground and complete these tasks:

1. Find 2 things in the playground that are inspired by technology or computers. Describe them.

2. Scan a QR code or look closely at one piece of equipment. What is something interesting you learned?

After the Visit (Reflect & Discuss)

1. What surprised you the most about the playground?

2. Linda said: "On a computer, kids are users. In the playground, they are creators." What does this mean to you?

3. Think of your favourite place in the city. How could you turn it into a learning place? Use the other side of the paper for your ideas and sketches.