

Outdoor Classroom Day

Activity pack

Welcome to our activity pack

We know the importance of offering children and young people the opportunity to experience, learn and develop. Our aim is to increase the accessibility and quality of outdoor learning for young people across the UK.

We work hard to be leaders in outdoor learning, not only by providing a New Forest based inclusive activity centre but by supporting you to provide outdoor learning in your local park, school playing field or even your garden at home.

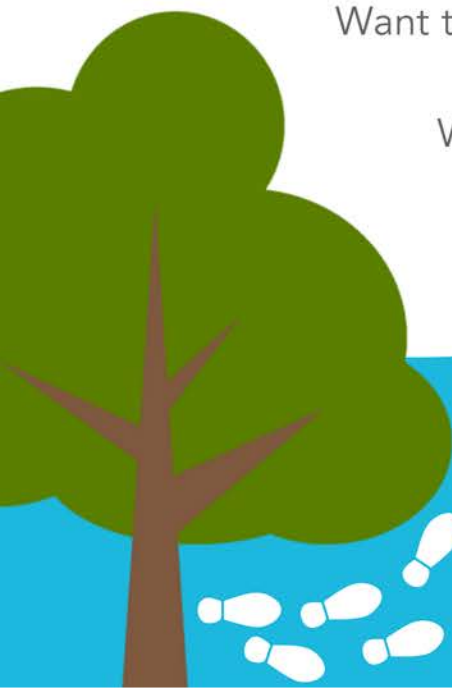
Getting your students outdoors is extremely important and we're excited to have you learning about ways to incorporate outdoor learning.

Did you know that learning outside allows young people to develop skills for life and enhances engagement with learning?

In this activity pack you will find a few different ideas so that you can all experience, learn and develop outdoors. We hope you and your students enjoy it!

Want to understand more about outdoor learning?

We are happy to host visits, so that you can see more about what we do.





Outdoor Learning Benefits

1 It helps boost confidence

2 Improves mental health

3 Teaches communication

4 Develop leadership skills

5 Challenge themselves

6 Builds resilience


It's no surprise that we LOVE all things outdoor learning and hope that your students enjoy our activities and that you can see the above benefits come true when you learn outdoors with them.




Getting outside the classroom

Bringing lessons outdoors doesn't need to be daunting or difficult! We hope that with this activity pack, you can see how doable and fun it can be for your students.

Below are 3 steps on how to plan and execute great outdoor classroom sessions so that it is easy, fun and exciting for everyone - that includes you!




Planning: This can be done the same way that you plan an indoor lesson. Be sure to introduce the activity to increase interest and intrigue in what is going to happen next. Remember you can easily grab attention with excitement and a hook!



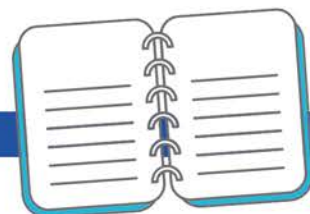
Activity session: Keep it simple and understandable for your age group. Hands-on activities are a great way to set up an exciting mood and also improve eco-awareness whilst working on the main topic.

Whilst the session is running, encourage teamwork as well as individual discovery and development. Be ready to help and lend a hand where needed but also allow your students to push themselves.



Evaluation and Reflection: Let your students have some time to share with the group things that they have learned and achieved during the session.

Use this as an opportunity to evaluate learnings and challenge any misconceptions.



Tips to make learning outdoors easier

As we're sure you know, it's always good to be prepared and find ways to make things as simple as possible for you and your students. Here are some top things to remember to make learning outdoors easier for everyone!

Set expectations

Like an indoor lesson set out a plan with goals for your students - when starting the session make sure your group know these goals.

Dress for the weather

You'd be surprised how not dressing right can ruin the day. Wear the right shoes - no white trainers for muddy days!

Circle up!

Get the group in a big circle with their backs to the sun so they can concentrate on your instructions - it will really help with their focus!

Evaluate outdoors

To help the learning stick, evaluate the session outdoors to provide valuable feedback as it's done in the context of their surroundings.

Take a bag

This helps keep your hands free so you can get stuck in and help! If your students see you taking part, they're likely to follow along.

Be sensitive

Some children may be scared of nature or not used to being in it. Make sure you are sensitive and help help boost their confidence.

Include the senses

Not everyone learns through a book - that's why outdoor learning is great! Include touch, sound and smell to increase awareness.

Keep it positive

Learning outdoors is exciting and something different which means students may act differently - keep everything positive!

Learn about the trees

This activity can be linked back to science, maths, languages and arts and can take up to 30 minutes.

There is so much more to learning about trees than their types. The human senses can be used to distinguish one tree from another, and here's how you can do it.



Shape

Leaf shapes aren't the only way to tell one tree apart from another, so can the shape of that tree! Explore the trunks and branches then discuss.

Scent

Get your noses involved and scratch the surface of the leaves or trunk and smell the difference in trees.

Evaluation

Now it's time to record your findings as a group. Depending on the curriculum it could have a scientific approach or an English storytelling focus, for example; The beech tree trunks look like elephant legs trudging through the African desert.

Your students can invent their own tricks to help recognise different trees and explore different ways to describe the sensory experiences e.g. poems

Surface

Each species of tree has its own range of texture. Explore the twigs, bark and leaves and see if your students can tell the difference with eyes shut.

Sound

Sit under the trees (when in bloom) and listen to the 'music that they produce. This gives a different perspective.

Maths and trees

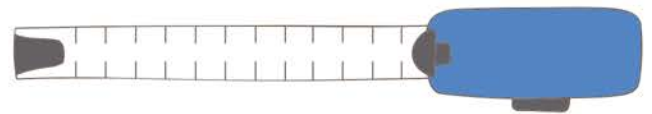
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This activity is great for maths and science outdoor sessions and can take from 30 to 45 minutes.

Did you know that...

Measuring, recording and ageing trees can offer lots of different opportunities for numbers and shapes. It will also help with your student's eco-awareness by studying and learning about trees.

Step 1 - Measuring



We're going to take trigonometry outside! Get your students to pair up - one is going to try and see the whole tree between their legs when they are looking upside down. Once they can see the top they're going to get their buddy to measure the distance between them and the tree - add your leg length and you've got a good approximate height of the tree!

Step 2 - How old is it?

Now it's time to work out the age of the tree! This can be done by counting the rings in the tree trunk - but we don't want to be cutting down trees! Get your students to measure its girth (circumference) from around 1.5m above the ground - make sure they measure in centimetres!

All trees grow at different rates just like humans. Trees on average grow around 2.5cm in girth per year. Dividing the tree girth (in cm) by 2.5 (average years) will get you an estimated age!

Evaluation

Did everyone work it out? Set new challenges by seeing which pairs can find the oldest or widest. Three other tasks could be to see how close the trees grow together or to find the largest/furthest/widest or to count the edges on the leaves of different species.



'Get outdoors' nature hunt

3

Try this activity as a whole group.

You will need:

- An empty egg carton
- Access to a garden / park

Get your students outside and collecting different objects from nature, try and get them to fill the box with all different leaves, rocks, flowers or twigs.



Extension:

1. Download the LeafSnap app on your phone
2. Head out on a walk around your school ground or local park. What plants and flowers can you see?
3. Take photos or upload your photos from earlier in the day and let the app identify them for you.
4. Scroll through the suggestions and read more about your plant. What's its name and what plant family does it belong to?

Art and science in nature

Art and science often overlap from out in the real world to in-school lessons. These ideas are a great way of blurring the lines and mixing art with science in nature, to give your students a very memorable lesson outdoors for 30 - 40 minutes.

Session 1 - Woodland sounds

Take time listening outside; wind in the leaves, branches breaking and birds singing. What direction are the sounds coming from and from how far away? Show different vibration sounds by tapping on living and dead wood. Now discuss if all tree species sound the same? How can you tell the difference between living and dead wood other than sound?

Session 2 - Shadow drawing

Start this session by looking into the passing of time and the movement of the sun. This can be done by putting a stick in the ground and marking the shadow - returning after a short while to see how far the shadow has moved.

Now you can take it to the next level with your students by introducing art to the session! Attach a bit of white card to the stick and carefully take time to trace the shadow of a plant that is being cast. After a while come back and redraw it once the shadow has moved with the sun. Give students a variety of soft pencils or charcoal to give the drawings a shadowy effect.

Want to go a step further? Use mud and soil to make the shadow effect!

Other ideas

- Move like a mini-beast. Start off individually and then slowly become a group to move as one big beast!
- Make up a dance about a tree, pigeon or a bunch of leaves.

A-Z in nature

Incorporate some outdoor learning with your English lesson by using this A-Z in nature with your students. Fill in what you find whilst exploring the outdoors - then sit down outdoors and make stories on what is found!

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P
Q	R	S	T
U	V	W	X
Y	Z		

Shelter Building

Split into small groups and see who can make the most impressive shelter (extra points for creativity).

You will need:

- An outside space
- Access to fallen twigs and leaves



Start outside by having your students in groups search for small sticks, twigs and leaves - the more the better!

Bring the group back to start building their shelters - with an open space big enough for a water bottle (we're working on a smaller than human scale here)

The students will then work on creating their shelter masterpiece - remember that the twigs are the sturdy foundations and the leaves are what help keep it watertight.

Have your students come up with a story about the shelter - like what creatures live there.

Extension:

Looking to make it harder? Add in the elements from water (rain) to a hairdryer (storm winds)! Try out different tactics to see whose shelter weathers the storm.



5 great ways to get outdoors with your students

Sometimes a whole outdoor session plan can be a bit much, or you just have limited time one week but still want to bring a lesson outdoors! Below are some easy ways to still achieve a great time outdoors, where your students are having fun, learning and developing themselves and relationships with each other.

Remember - not everything needs to link back to the National Curriculum. Sometimes it is great to just remember the benefits of being outdoors and focus on them!

1

Play a game of outdoor bingo. Points for the first to spot a white flower, black bird or stick.

2

Turn art class into something natural - make a nature wind chime out of twigs, pine cones and shells! Hang it where it will catch the wind.

3

Use old pots and pans to concoct mud masterpieces. Create a little mud kitchen and let their imagination run wild. Perfect for playtime.

4

Go on a nature walk for just 10 minutes and have your students name everything that they can hear.

5

Games outdoors! Sometimes a game of tag or duck, duck, goose is all your students need to enjoy the outdoors and connect with nature.



Art in the environment

8

Promotes literacy and spelling skills - so it is great for bringing your English lessons outdoors!

This activity is all about getting arty outdoors!

The goal is to make art outside using only natural materials. Things that your group could use are sticks, leaves, stones, feathers and anything else that they can find!

To get your group being more environmentally aware encourage them with natural items that are already on the ground and don't need to be pulled from the root - e.g. steer them away from picking flowers.

Encourage them that this is their opportunity to let their creativity run wild - and be sure to give lots of positive reinforcement throughout the activity!

Check out a few of our art activity sessions below that you can do too!

Stick creations



Leaf sculptures



Nature names



Stone art



Mini dens



Bark drawings



How to evaluate with your group

Once you've finished your activity outdoors, you're going to want to evaluate the session with your students. It's always best for the evaluation to take place outdoors to make sure it is as relevant as possible! Here are some different ways to evaluate whilst outdoors.

1

Sharing

Set time aside to give your students a chance to share their achievements with the rest of the class, giving them a chance to work on their self-esteem. It will also help you explore the thinking and reasoning behind their work and praise their results. This style of evaluation will also improve their listening and speaking skills.

2

Group review

Split your students up into small groups and get them to discuss what they did and learnt. They can then give feedback on their findings in turn, back to the larger group.

3

Horseshoe

Make a horseshoe shape - one end set as 0 (not at all) and the other 10 (completely). Assess learnings and goals with the horseshoe e.g. How well did we achieve...?

Top things to remember:

- Continue to give positive reinforcement when students offer thoughts during the evaluation process.
- Encourage speaking but also listening to others so that everyone feels comfortable.
- Before starting the activity, set aside time at the end so that you don't have to rush through the evaluation stage - make sure to ask if and what they enjoyed being outdoors.



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