

A young child is sitting in a muddy puddle on a forest path. The child is wearing a bright yellow raincoat, a high-visibility yellow vest, dark green rain trousers, and patterned rubber boots. They are also wearing a brown monkey hat with a pink bow. The child's hands are in red gloves. In the background, the legs and red gloves of an adult are visible, suggesting they are supervising the child. The ground is covered in brown leaves and mud.

Getting Outdoors with Children Birth to 5

**A Booklet of Ideas
for Parents & Carers**



HELPFUL TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES TO TRY AT HOME WITH UNDER 5s

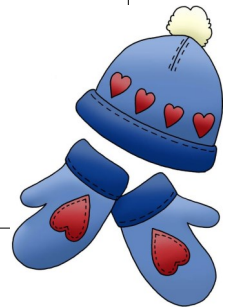
It has been proven that being outdoors has a positive effect on your wellbeing. Now more than ever, it is important that we get outside as much as possible. The winter weather sets new challenges and opportunities. We can access the outdoors near to where we live and this is a perfect time to learn to interact with it in new and different ways.

Remember the Danish forest school quote:

‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing’

In cold and wet weather it is important to make sure you are able to remain warm and dry so you can fully enjoy the experience. You don’t need specialist outdoor clothing, try to use what you have got. Think about putting on layers— at least two pairs of socks (socks can be used as gloves to keep hands warm) and end up with your outdoor coat and wellies. You can buy inexpensive wellies at your local supermarket.

The more you prepare for a trip outside in winter, the more you will enjoy it!



Where can you go?

Do you have a garden? It can be fun seeing what is happening in your own garden space. If you lift a brick or garden pot you will find mini beasts hiding from the cold.

Treat them carefully and put the object back carefully so you don’t harm them.

No garden? Try exploring your local areas. Find where you are on your mobile phone and see if you can plan a route together. Can you see any green space on the map?

Sometimes we live near a space and have never been to it. Lockdown is a good time to walk in your own home area and make a discovery.



Draw your own map of the route you took.

Plan your route for the next day.

Maps can be inspiring!

Walking in Bristol's natural spaces.

Bristol has plenty of public open green spaces to explore.
Have you found Forest of Avon website for inspiration?
Or the wildlife Trust?

<https://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/>



The Woodland Trust have plenty of ideas for outdoor activities (some suitable for lockdown)
They have suggested 9 different things for families to do in local woodlands.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/12/fun-ideas-for-family-winter-walks/>

National Trust: 50 things to do to get closer to nature (some suitable for lockdown)

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/50-things-to-do>



Forestry England



The Japanese practice of shinrin yoku, or **Forest Bathing**, is good for both physical and mental wellbeing. It is proven to reduce stress hormone production, improve feelings of happiness and free up creativity, as well as lower heart rate and blood pressure, boost the immune system and accelerate recovery from illness.

If you can't get to the woods try visiting one of the virtual forest links below.

Forestry England. Forest scenes on video:

<https://www.forestryengland.uk/blog/how-bring-the-wellbeing-benefits-forests-your-home>

Forest Bathing, Pause, listen, imagine. You tube video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=88&v=aGnrBYsqC2U&feature=emb_title

Try going on the same walk each day and notice how your local area changes. Model stopping and noticing the natural world, look up in the sky and all around you.

Taking time to connect with the natural world is proven to have many benefits. Claims that connecting children with the outdoors is good for their social and emotional development, improved mental health and psychological and emotional wellbeing, are backed with clear evidence. A study by the American Medical Association concluded that "Children will be smarter, better able to get along with others, healthier and happier, when they have regular opportunities for free and unstructured play in the outdoors." Exposure to nature has a soothing effect on children, and can reduce hyperactivity, especially in those suffering from ADHD.

The term '**biophilia**' explains how humans seek connections with nature and other forms of life. Being in or around nature makes us feel good, our physical and mental wellbeing depends on us spending time in a natural environment.



Sticks. Sticks appeal to all age groups!

They can be safely played with when children are shown how to carry them carefully.

As with any tool it is good to teach how to carry it safely.

Children like to find things to use in their own way. Watch and see what interests your child. Is it the length, the weight or the feel of it? Does your child use it as a tool to investigate or strike objects to get a sound? Do they drag it or carry it? Do they want to build a den with it?



There are plenty of **adult led ideas** for you to try to make together although we would always suggest **following your child's interests first**. Here are a few ideas:

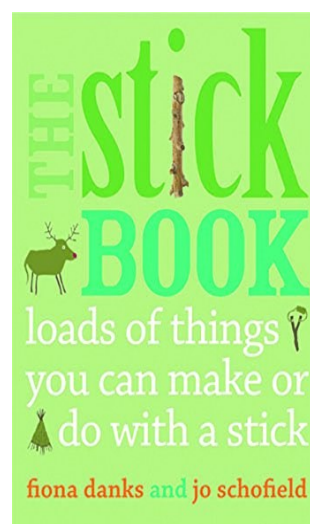
- Make a picture frame to take home or just work on the ground where you find it.
- Use sticks to explore mud
- Use sticks to make music on logs and trees
- Find different lengths of stick
- Be inspired by artists who have made sculptures with sticks



<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/no-12-have-fun-with-sticks>



How To Make A
Stick Picture Frame



BIRDS

Winter is a good time to spot the different birds living near you.

How many different types can you see?

This link has examples of different birds.

We have 406 species of birds in UK.

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/identify-a-bird/>

Can you hear the different songs? Try and listen to different birdsong when you go outside. If you like to identify birds by their songs then there are some good websites to help you.

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-songs/what-bird-is-that/>



Birds are hungry in winter and it can be difficult for them to find food, especially in cold frosty weather.

Can you find some ways to feed the birds? You could try a window sill, your garden or a local tree near your house.

Have a look at the different ways you can make a feeder.

If you don't have seeds, use an old piece of toast and hang it on string.



20 Creative
DIY Bird Feeders



Finding local wild and natural spaces.

Walking from your house in any direction and being open to what you see can give you the shared experiences that invite conversation. Language development is most impacted by holding two way conversations with several exchanges. Enjoy each others company and you are building on your child's communication and language.



Come back to your home and have a big piece of paper on the floor (old rolls of wallpaper are good for this) paint, chalks, pencils or pens.

Try to help each other remember what you saw and make a floor picture of your trip. This is a great way of seeing what interests your child has and what they are noticing outside.

You may find that your child responds emotionally to colours. Why not try giving them a range of paints in natural world colours– browns, greens, blues and see how they express their feelings.

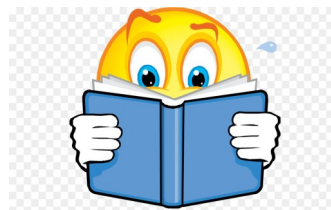
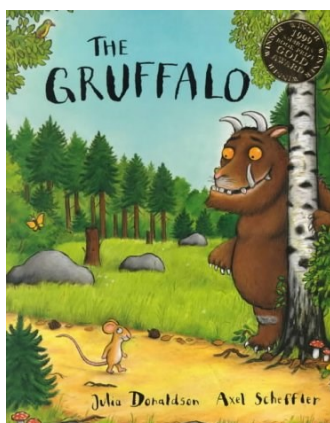
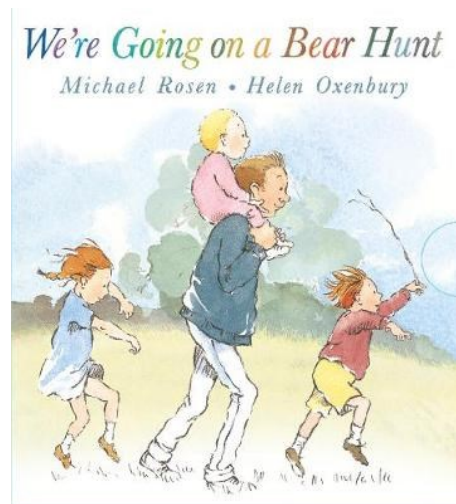
Sharing a book at home and then recalling it as you are on your walk can be fun.

We're going on a bear hunt. Read by the author Michael Rosen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OI7fe766nk&t=94s>

Or a mum reading We're going on a bear hunt to a group of children

<https://youtu.be/OiNsZTakNWo>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8sUPpPc8Ws>

Listen to The Gruffalo being read on Youtube!



I spy treasure hunts.

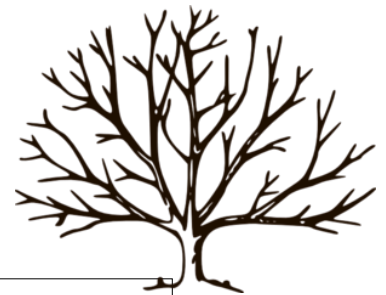
If you have spent a lot of time looking at screens, it is good to get out and focus on things far away. This is good for the muscles in your eyes. You can play around with the format of this game.

I spy with my little eye a tree with a bench under it....



Collecting bag. Collecting things you find.

There are plenty of things in a winter landscape to find and collect. Sticks, dry seed heads, leaves, feathers and many more.



Identify trees in your local park.

This can be harder in winter, but with a little detective work quite possible.

<http://treetoolsforschools.org.uk/categorymenu/?cat=activities>

Listen to the sounds outside.

Can you see what is making the noise?



Go on a mini beast hunt. Lifting logs and stones and looking under bark and leaves can be a great way of discovering insects.

You can scoop them into a small pot to look at closely and then return them to their home and cover them up again.

Can you identify them all?



Feeling textures in winter out in nature.

Moss, mud, ice, clay, tree trunks, branches and winter dry seed heads.

MUD and ICE

There are many opportunities to develop the '**Characteristics of Effective Learning**' in a natural environment. This is done by using your senses to explore the world around you, showing particular interests, paying attention to details, getting deeply involved, making links and noticing patterns in your experiences.



Discovering the beauty of plants and fungi



Going out in the woods, letting children interact in their own way with what they see before them.

Following paths.

In winter the paths are muddy and slippery. It can be exciting to follow a path and see where it takes you.

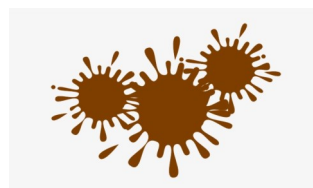


Mud.

Squelching and squishing in mud! There is plenty of it around at the moment. Look at footprints in the mud.

Can you collect some to use as clay? You could mix mud pies or make a mud sculpture.

You can use mud as paint. Take some paper with you and see how many colours you find in different muddy places.



Ice.

Finding ice on a cold frosty morning is magical.

Can you stamp on an icy puddle to hear it crunch?

If you leave a tray of objects in water outside on a really cold night you have your own ice experiments to explore!



Moving.

Let your child explore a natural wild space—climb, crawl, jump, run, spin and roll.

All things that are difficult to do in your own home!

Imaginative play

Imaginative storytelling

Imagine who might live in the woods.

You can tell a story to each other or let your child tell you their own. Let your imagination go!



Imaginative small world play

Tree trunks make inviting places to build a small magical homes and are a great start to storytelling together.



Dens.

Get ideas in how to make a den and go home to make your own.



Bristol Early Years Website
www.bristolearlyyears.org.uk

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www.twitter.com/BristolEarly



www.instagram.com/bristol_ey



www.facebook.com/BristolEarly