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# outdoor learning pack



for primary school teachers in Scotland,  
England, Northern Ireland and Wales





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# why teach outdoors?

“The classroom of the future should not be limited to a classroom at all – an ‘excellent’ curriculum would go beyond the traditional boundaries and offer real-world learning experiences outdoors.” *Taking Learning Outdoors – LTS 2007*



## A real-world context for learning

Learning in a real context can turn the abstract into the concrete. It inspires curiosity and investigation which inspire enquiring minds and enables them to achieve.

## Outdoor learning complements indoor learning

Recent studies show that the outdoors is a dynamic environment that stimulates creativity and enables learning to happen faster. Hands-on = minds-on!



## Supports emotional and physical well-being

Fresh air and open space obviously promote physical activity but the impact of greenspaces on mental health is just as important.

## Impacts positively on attitudes and self-esteem

Children feel free to be themselves outside of the constraints of the classroom. Those who struggle to concentrate indoors often blossom outside, where their kinaesthetic learning needs can be addressed more fully.



## Increases knowledge of and care for the natural environment

Regular direct contact with the natural world builds deep connections that last a lifetime. How can we expect people to care about something they don't know?

❖ **More about why outdoor learning is important**

Outdoor Learning [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/outdoorlearning](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/outdoorlearning)

Grounds for Learning [www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk)



# index

The type of outdoor learning described in this pack is something quite different from 'outdoor pursuits'. It is not rock-climbing or kayaking. It is about taking your normal everyday curriculum and teaching it outside. The outdoor areas you use could be very close to the school and within walking distance – it might be the school grounds, a local park or a nearby patch of woodland. So, no long bus journey, no cost and no high-risk activity!

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*This pack is a result of working closely with primary school teachers in West Lothian, Scotland, who are dedicated to removing barriers to using the outdoor classroom. Thanks go to all the teachers and schools who have contributed to this work through their time, expertise and honesty.*



# getting outside the classroom

Planning an outdoor lesson is done in the same way as inside the classroom:



- ❖ **Introduction (hook):**  
introduce the topic in the classroom with an activity that promotes interest and intrigue in what is to come (see page 6/7)



- ❖ **Journey Out (starter):**  
simple, hands-on ambulatory activities create the right mood within the group for learning outdoors, whilst also raising awareness of the natural environment and introducing the main topic (see pages 8/9)



- ❖ **Main Activity (development):**  
a 'hub' activity is just like a 'carpet' activity indoors, where you ask the group to spread out from a central point to do the activity and then return to you at the end (see pages 10 – 17)



- ❖ **Reflection/Sharing (evaluation/assessment):**  
give the children a chance to share with others the things they have learned or achieved. It's also an opportunity to evaluate the learning and challenge any misperception (see page 18/19)



- ❖ **Journey Back (plenary):**  
reinforce learning on the walk back to school (see page 8/9) and then follow-up in the classroom (see page 20)

❖ **Approaches to outdoor learning include**

*Earth Education* by Steve Van Matre

*Flow Learning* by Joseph Cornell





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“Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as a valuable gift, not as a hard duty”  
*Albert Einstein*

## feeling at home in the outdoor classroom

The beauty of teaching outdoors is that the children often do not perceive it as ‘learning’ and yet they learn some of their most valuable lessons there. The lack of walls means that they feel less inhibited – both physically and mentally – and it allows them to join up their thinking by applying it in a real-world context.

### Indoor vs Outdoor classroom techniques

Indoor	Outdoor	Notes
Walls	Set clear physical boundaries	Plan your route and know where you will have space to stop and circle up the class. Visualise your own ‘boundaries’ and then define the edges of your teaching area verbally or using physical markers (i.e. tie tape around some trees).
Emergency procedures (i.e. fire)	Emergency procedures (i.e. missing person)	Agree a meeting point and what to do. Ensure all staff and children are aware of these. Know where the access points would be for emergency vehicles.
Chairs & tables	Sit-mats on the ground	Stops shuffling feet!
Prepared paper materials	Found natural materials	Twigs, fallen leaves, stones, earth, rain... the list is endless!!
Warmth (radiators)	Warmth (appropriate clothing)	Get a bank of clothing in school – buy waterproofs, wellies and warm gear or ask for parents to donate old articles of clothing.
First aid kit	First aid kit	Be aware of any relevant medical information – i.e. tree nut allergies, hayfever etc. Take a rucksack with: First aid kit, water, mobile phone (check reception), emergency contact numbers (inc. all adult helpers mobile numbers in case groups separate), risk assessment and hazard tick list (pages 23 & 24 of this pack).
Risk assessed & managed	Risk assessed & managed	As usual for off-site visits – risk assess site, route and activity beforehand. Complete last minute hazard tick list on the day as a final check. Check your schools child:adult ratio.
Planned lessons	Planned lessons & routes	Good planning is the key.
Toilets	Bushes (away from water source & working area)	Ensure children are prepared; that they know how long they will be out and that there will be NO TOILETS!!
Agreed expectations – golden rules & procedures	Agreed expectations – golden rules & procedures	Setting expectations together beforehand will increase enjoyment for you and your class. Involve other staff as well as the children.
Staff ratios = low	Staff ratios = higher	Get supportive parents on board – as with the children, this will engage some that indoor teaching doesn’t. As usual, ensure they are checked through PVG or DBS Schemes.
Evaluation	Evaluation	See page 18 of this pack for ideas.
Assessment	Assessment	See page 19 of this pack for ideas.
Strategies for rewarding and managing behaviour	Strategies for rewarding and managing behaviour	Be clear about how you will respond to all behaviours to ensure consistency and fairness. Share your strategy with other adults as well the children.
Help/phone nearby	Mobile phone or 2-way radios	Know where you have good signal coverage on site and where emergency vehicle access points are (including street name or grid ref).
Closed, predictable environment	Open environment	Good planning and pre-visits to site will make things more ‘predictable’. Don’t be afraid to let things be child- or nature-led!
Children’s parents and teaching assistants feel uncomfortable	Children’s parents and teaching assistants feel uncomfortable	Taking the class outdoors may make some parents and adults feel unsure. Address their fears and reassure them by holding a meeting to explain why the school feels it is important. ‘Outdoor Learning’ is often confused with ‘Outdoor Pursuits’ so outline some of the activities.

### Abraham Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs”

This theory is often shown as a pyramid, depicting how people cannot achieve ‘higher level’ needs (self-esteem & personal growth) unless their ‘lower level’ needs have been met first (physiological, social & safety). For more information visit [www.teacherstoolbox.co.uk/maslow.html](http://www.teacherstoolbox.co.uk/maslow.html)



# making outdoor teaching easier

These suggestions may seem obvious but they will add to your group's enjoyment and make your role easier too!

Tip	How it can help
Set expectations before going out	Understanding what is going to happen and how long it takes will help children relax. Keep it positive and emphasise 'care' through looking after themselves, each other and the natural environment.
Take a rucksack for necessities	First aid kit, water, mobile phone, emergency contact details, hazard tick list, sit-mats, 2 whistles – a more gentle one to call group back together (i.e. owl hoot or ocharina) and a sharp-sounding emergency one. Don't forget any evaluation equipment being used – e.g. camera (and spare batteries); video camera; post-it notes. And if carrying activity props, pack them in order of use to make your life easier!
Clothing	Ensure children are wearing appropriate clothing and footwear. Suggest zipping up / tucking in / putting on hats BEFORE they start getting too cold (or hot).
Be sensitive to fears / perceptions	Children may feel woods are dangerous (thanks to many nursery rhymes & fairy tales as well as negative media stories!) If these arise try to deal with them in an understanding and non-judgemental way.
Keep it simple	Children find it hard to listen to someone talking for too long, especially outdoors. Have a clear mental plan of the session before you go out.
Visual, Auditory & Kinaesthetic	Engage everyone by trying to have a visual focal point (i.e. stand near or hold the thing you are talking about) and, if you can, demonstrate it too.
Circle-up	Get the whole group, including adults, into a circle when introducing and ending activities as this means you will have everyone's attention and hopefully only have to say things once. Invent different ways to do this to make it fun (i.e. 'sticking' elbows, knees or toes to neighbours.)
Weather affects ability to learn	Try to stand facing the sun when talking to your group so they won't have to squint. Attention span decreases in windy, wet or cold weather so adjust your expectations accordingly.
Meeting dogs off the lead	Ask children to fold their arms and look away from dogs if you meet them off the lead – the dog will quickly get bored and leave.
Evaluate outside	Sharing the learning experience whilst still outside will provide more valuable feedback because it is done in context.

## FURTHER GUIDANCE

**Going Out There - A Scottish Framework for Safe Practice in Off-site Visits**  
[www.goingoutthere.co.uk](http://www.goingoutthere.co.uk)

"Outdoors Issues and Matters" from [www.creativestarlearning.co.uk/advice](http://www.creativestarlearning.co.uk/advice)

Scottish Outdoor Access Code [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)

Outdoor access and recreation – statutory guidance – The Countryside Code England  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code)

Countryside Code Wales [www.countrysidecodewales.org.uk](http://www.countrysidecodewales.org.uk)

Countryside Code Northern Ireland [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/countryside-code](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/countryside-code)





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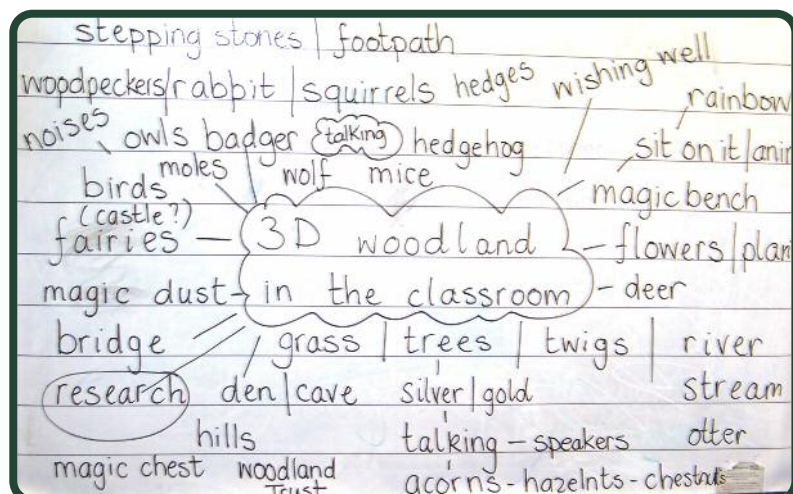


## Case Study of *The Enchanted Woodland* Longridge Primary School, West Lothian (Part I)

A teacher at Longridge Primary School in West Lothian developed a topic for her class called *The Enchanted Woodland*. She pointed out that this type of thematic teaching links very well with the Curriculum for Excellence and is being widely used across West Lothian and beyond.

The topic started when the children arrived one morning to find a paper trail of animal tracks leading into the classroom. At the end of them a toy fox and its cub were sitting in the centre of the floor with a letter next to them. The letter explained how the foxes' home – the enchanted woodland – had been destroyed and so they no longer had anywhere to live. It asked the children if they could help them create a new home.

From this they started to investigate and develop their ideas about woodlands and wildlife – both real and 'enchanted'. Although she had planned for the whole topic, the teacher was careful to allow the children to lead the sessions and was prepared to be flexible if the children's interests and ideas required it – which they did! The class then planned together and decided upon their course of action.



*Mind-map of the topic with the class*



From this, the class explored their topic through a wide variety of activities and across numerous areas of the curriculum. They visited their local woodland, used the internet and the school library for research. They studied woodland through relevant novels, poetry, drama, sound and art. They planted trees with the Woodland Trust, researched the local Woodland Action Plan (WAP) and used resources from organisations like the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust to help inform a debate about why woodlands are felled and what impact that has. Finally they turned their own classroom into an 'Enchanted Woodland' by making papier-mâché trees, flowers and animals.

The animals and trees were given a voice through the children, allowing them to explore speech and literary techniques within the topic. It is easy to see how a project like this can stimulate the imagination but there were so many other skills in use as well; co-operation, collaboration, enquiry, investigation, writing for a purpose – the list goes on.





## Case Study of *The Enchanted Woodland* Longridge Primary School, West Lothian (Part 2)



Clockwise from left: *An Enchanted Tree*; *the Wildflower Meadow*; *some Po-e-trees!*

At the end of the topic, parents were sent invitations to come into school for the 'Grand Opening' of the forest where they were given a guided tour by the children. The parents were greeted into the 'forest' by the voice of the trees (all spoken and recorded by the pupils) and all their work was on display for their parents to see. Expectation and excitement was high... and the experience did not disappoint. Parents were thrilled by the standard the children's work and the enthusiasm it had generated both at home and for school. Many expressed regret that their own education had not been like this!

As a final touch, the children were sent another letter from the fox, thanking them for their help and acknowledging their ability to care for other living creatures. The class was then presented with a gift of a butterfly farm so that they could continue to apply their new knowledge and skills.

The teacher reflected that she had noticed how much the children had remained engaged with the learning during their entire project – something that was very obvious when talking to the class. She commented that: "This type of project had a very positive impact on the children; you were able to see their enthusiasm which was evident throughout the topic. The pupils were also very motivated to improve the quality of their work."

Many thanks go to Claire Anthony and all at Longridge Primary School for sharing their fantastic ideas, inspiration and planning for the purpose of this resource pack.





## INFORMATION



Activity Type

Curriculum areas

**All**

Length

**45 – 60 mins**

# starting in the classroom

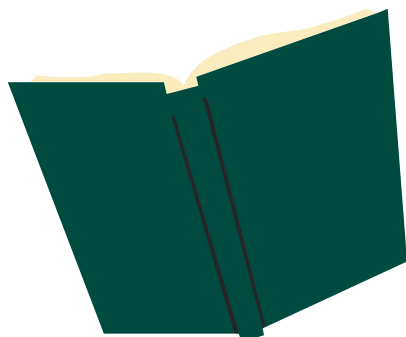
Learning is a journey. You can stimulate interest, intrigue and imagination in your new outdoor learning topic from the start by using varied approaches to introducing it.



## Surprise invitation or parcel

Send an invitation letter (or email) to the class asking them to visit their local woodland or asking for their help to investigate an environmental issue.

Arrange for a surprise package to be delivered, addressed to the class. Fill it with items that will spark discussion about the new topic.



## Share a story

Find a good story that illustrates the topic and gives you an opportunity to talk around the subject with your class before going outdoors. The children could bring sections of it to life for one another using natural materials to stimulate the senses – or write their own story to share.

## Fictional characters

Bringing in a recognisable toy from a relevant book can provide a great stimulus for your outdoor topic. For example an Eeyore (or even a homemade 'Stick Man'!) with a Paddington-style "Please look after this..." label.

## Inspiration...

"It is not what we do to the child or for the child that educates him, but what we enable him to do for himself, to see and learn and feel and understand for himself. The child grows by his own efforts and his own real experience."

Susan Issacs, quoted in "First Hand Experience – What Matters to Children" by Diane Rich et al.

## Like to start with a story? These books are good to share!

Weather *Little Cloud* by Eric Carle

Adaptation *Harris Finds His Feet* by Catherine Rayner

Uses of Sticks *Stick Man* by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler

Outdoor Activities *You and Me, Little Bear* by Martin Waddell & Barbara Firth

Natural Environment *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen & Helen Oxenbury



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# starting in the classroom

Simple engagement methods can be used to 'hook' the children into a topic or any outdoor session. The sense of 'mystery' will heighten their enthusiasm whatever's coming next!

## INFORMATION



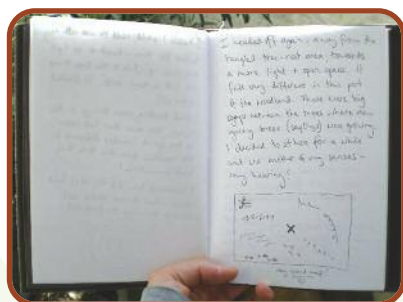
Activity Type

Curriculum areas

**All**

Length

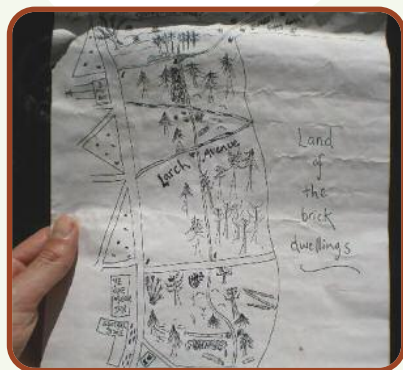
**45 – 60 mins**



### A 'secret' diary

Write a short nature diary from a fictional character describing the walk you would like to share with your class (including brief summaries of the activities you'd like to include too).

Leave it to be 'found' with an invitation for it to be shared with the class whilst following the route described within!



### Interesting maps

Create a map of your local woodland area stylised to look like a very old map, a treasure map or one found in a book that is familiar to the children (i.e. Winnie the Pooh).

Use intriguingly enigmatic names for features they will find there (old trees, hills, mossy stumps) and clues as to what they might do in particular spots.

Hang it on the classroom wall for a week or two before visiting the outdoor area to help build a sense of expectation and excitement.

### More mystery...

The class arrive back after break to find the room darkened and a slideshow of photographs showing familiar local places taken from unusual angles. Play some suitable music or woodland sounds to create a calm atmosphere. The children will be looking forward to their walk with anticipation but will now be focused on trying to guess exactly where the photos were taken.

❖❖❖ **If you found these ideas inspiring try...**

"Acclimatizing" by Steve Van Matre, for more.

Nature Detectives resources now available at [www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk](http://www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk)



## INFORMATION



Activity Type

Curriculum areas  
**All, including  
Health and Wellbeing /  
Physical Education**

Length

**10 – 20 mins**

# getting there... (and back again!)

Ambulatory activities can be enjoyed whilst walking. They give children a focus during the journey to (or from) your natural area and enable them to engage more fully with the main topic when they arrive.



### Immersing activities

Give each child a simple cardboard tube to help them focus on things up close or far away as they are walking.

This works whatever your focus: living things, animal homes, patterns, numbers of... things beginning with the letter... – the list is endless!



Being creative will stimulate interest and imagination. Collecting things is much more engaging when using interesting collecting pots or bags.



You can stick things to a shaped-card with a strip of double-sided tape if it's windy! They will make a beautiful reminder of your walk and help to 'bring the outside in'.

### Journey or Story sticks

Use wool to tie found natural objects to a stick in the order they were found. Then use it to help retell the story of your journey.



❖ **Liked those? The inspiration for them and many like them was...**

*'Earthwalks'* from [www.eartheducation.org.uk](http://www.eartheducation.org.uk)

Outdoor and Woodland Learning Scotland [www.owlscotland.org](http://www.owlscotland.org)

Northern Ireland Forest Schools Association [www.nifsa.org.uk](http://www.nifsa.org.uk)

Outdoor Learning Wales [www.outdoorlearningwales.org](http://www.outdoorlearningwales.org)

## INFORMATION

Activity Type

Curriculum areas

**All, including  
Health and Wellbeing /  
Physical Education**

Length

**10 – 20 mins**



# getting there... (and back again!)

Raising awareness of the things that are around them will help to immerse your class in the natural environment.

## Leave a trail

One group goes ahead and leaves an obvious trail using natural materials or chalk to show the other group where to go (*agree your symbols first*).

## Slow, quiet walking

Moving slowly and quietly increases awareness and appreciation of the natural world. Taking shorter strides than normal, place one foot down carefully in front of you without putting any weight on it. Slowly shift the centre of gravity from the back foot to the front one. Practise this technique by asking the class to walk across the woodland to reach one member of the class (who has their eyes closed) without being heard by them!



## Varied vision

Encourage children to view the world around them in different ways. Try to think of interesting perspectives on your route each time you do it – overhead, under leaves, backwards, through strips of coloured plastic.

Focus in on the very *small* or the very *TALL*! Using fingers to make a frame, imagine you are a camera and the variety of shots you could view – *landscape, macro (close up), wide-angle*.

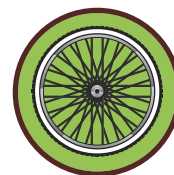
... **Liked those? Try these!**

“*Nature and Survival for Children*” from Tom Brown’s Field Guides

“*Sharing Nature with Children – Parts I & II*” by Joseph Cornell



# INFORMATION



Activity Type

Curriculum areas  
**Science, Maths,  
Languages, Arts**

Length

**15 – 25 mins**

# getting to know your trees

There's more to tree identification than just learning a name.  
The senses can be used to really explore what makes each one unique.



## Shape

Leaf shapes can distinguish one tree from another as can the tree's profile.



## Surface

Twigs, leaves, bark on the trunk – each species has its own range of textures. Explore them thoroughly with your class and then see if they can tell different trees apart with their eyes closed.



## Scent

Scratch the surface of some leaves and you'll smell the difference...



## Sound

Sitting and listening under different trees (when in leaf) will give another perspective on your trees and their 'music'.

## Record your findings

The needles of Douglas Fir trees smell like spicy oranges; beech tree trunks look like elephant legs; aspen leaves sound like the sea. Your children can invent their own 'tricks' to help recognise different tree species. Explore different ways to describe the sensory experiences you've had of your trees and use it to write poems to hang on a Po-e-tree.

## More things to do with trees

- > "Meet a Tree" activity available from Joseph Cornell's *Sharing Nature* website
- > "Measuring the height of a tree" Science and Plants for Schools  
[www.saps.org.uk/attachments/article/141/SAPS\\_How\\_to\\_find\\_the\\_height\\_of\\_a\\_tree.pdf](http://www.saps.org.uk/attachments/article/141/SAPS_How_to_find_the_height_of_a_tree.pdf)
- > Once you really know your trees, the names will be easier to remember – in many languages. (see the Gaelic and Modern Language tree-name sheets on page 21)

... These might help too...

Craigmillar Wildlife Web activities – [www.wildlifeweb.org.uk](http://www.wildlifeweb.org.uk)  
WildPlay Kitbag activities – [www.herefordshirewt.org/discover-learn](http://www.herefordshirewt.org/discover-learn)

# animal homes

What are the features that make somewhere a good home? Sheltered, warm, dry, near water and food-sources – plus fresh-air provided by all the green plants of course.

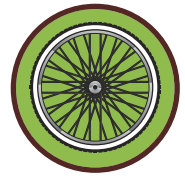
Which natural materials could be used to build one if you were a native animal living in the local woods? Which have the best properties for building? Which are best for warmth?

## INFORMATION

Activity Type

Curriculum areas  
**Sciences, Arts,  
Technology**

Length  
**30 – 45 mins**



- 1 Decide which native mammal each small group is going to make. Make your mammal from clay and natural materials.
- 2 Gather some more natural materials and build a shelter in a suitable place (i.e. on the ground for a hedgehog, in a tree for a squirrel).
- 3 Put each mammal in its new home and allow an opportunity for the children to visit each other's shelters. Discuss the different techniques, materials and positions of each shelter.
- 4 Extend the activity into thermal properties of materials by using bottles filled with hot-water as the 'animals'. Take each animal's temperature at the start, leave them in their homes for a set time and then return later to retake temperatures.

## Inspiration

A wonderfully colourful collection of activities, crafts and games which encourage children to get outdoors can be found in "Nature's Playground" and "Make it Wild", by Fiona Danks & Jo Schofield.

### ... Homes stories to tell to get children started...

"Do Lions Live on Lily Pads?" by Melanie Walsh

"A House is Built at Pooh Corner for Eeyore" by A. A. Milne







## INFORMATION

Activity Type



Curriculum areas  
**Sciences, Maths**

Length  
**30 – 45 mins**



# minibeasts in the trees

Safely looking for minibeasts can be tricky in urban woods so if you don't want to encourage hunting at ground level, why not look in the trees?



- 1 Working in small groups ask two children to stretch out a sheet of white cloth (not fluffy material or your beasts will stick to it) beneath a tree branch. When choosing their tree, remind children to be aware of any thorns or prickly leaves.



- 2 Another child in the group then gives the tree branch a few firm shakes without damaging the tree. Anything living there will be a bit surprised when it falls onto the sheet so you may have to wait for a moment for them to start to move!



- 3 Use a paint-brush to gently scoop minibeasts into the pot (the winged ones will fly away fairly quickly!) ready for the child with the ID sheet to see what they might have found. Comparing the variety of life found on different tree species will help to assess their biodiversity value.

### Other minibeast hunting Ideas

- Look under the leaves of the trees and bushes nearby.
- Check out the bark – lots of things live there! If you have trees in your school grounds, tie some strips of corrugated card around the trunk and check back in a few days to see what's taken shelter under them.
- Dead wood (fallen logs or branches) offer an excellent habitat for lots of different minibeasts from the ones found on living trees.



... ❖ **Liked those? You'll love these!**

Countryside Classroom [www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/](http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/)

Outdoor Learning Directory [www.outdoorlearningdirectory.com](http://www.outdoorlearningdirectory.com)

# numeracy

## INFORMATION



Activity Type

Curriculum areas

**Maths, Sciences**

Length

**30 – 45 mins**

Photos: Kate Walters

Measuring, recording and ageing trees offers numerous opportunities to explore numbers and shape.



### Height

Try to see the top of a tree whilst looking upside-down between your legs! When you can see the top, ask someone to measure the distance between you and the tree. Add your leg length for a good approximate height of the tree – it's just trigonometry really!



### Age / Girth

You can age a tree by counting its rings of growth. But that's not very easy unless it has been cut down! Fortunately, the approximate age of a tree can be estimated from the girth (circumference) of the trunk at 1.5m above the ground.

Although each tree grows at a slightly different rate (just like us), on average the new growth on its girth is 2.5cm per year. Dividing the tree girth (in cm) by 2.5 = age in years. Can the children find a tree their age? Which is the oldest and fattest?

### Other things to do with trees, leaves and seeds!

- > Count the number of paces between one tree and another – how close do they grow to each other?
- > Plot them onto a map or grid-squared paper.
- > Compare shape or area of leaves or seeds.
- > Find the largest, tallest, furthest, widest...
- > Count the number of edges on leaves of different species.

...Liked those? You could try these...

Record fat, old trees or ones with an interesting history! [www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk](http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk)

Record tree health and more [www.opalexplornature.org/schools](http://www.opalexplornature.org/schools)





## INFORMATION

Activity Type

Curriculum areas

**Languages, Sciences**

Length

**30 – 45 mins**

# literacy

The natural world is a wonderful source of inspiration for both written and spoken language. Visits to your local green space will give children a shared real-life experience to be recorded or discussed in class.



### Recipe for a Woodland\*

Sitting outside, give each child a pencil and a piece of paper and ask them to write a recipe for their own woodland. Encourage the children to be as creative as they can. Which ingredients would they add? How would they make sure it was sustainable? Think about biodiversity and external influences like the weather.

### Oxymorons

Writing up a journey using specific literacy techniques, *“Walking through that barren greenspace in the deafening silence was such sweet sorrow...”*



### Collective noun faking

A parliament of owls; a storytelling of rooks; an army of frogs; a glint of goldfish; a prickle of hedgehogs. These are all real names for groups of animals that reflect their characteristics.

You couldn't make them up, could you?! Or could you...?

### Other Ideas

- > Word games, word groups, adjectives, nouns, onomatopoeia.
- > Poems like Haiku, Acrostic, Lyric or Shape.
- > Traditional stories, fairy tales, mythology & folklore – often set in the natural world they can be used to challenge popular misconceptions about woods. Encourage children to read books outside. Set up a storytelling or quiet reading space to enable this to happen.

❖ **Liked those? Try these for more great ideas...**

*“Jumpstart! Literacy – games and activities for 7 – 14 years”* by Pie Corbett

Literacy Outdoors [www.creativestarning.co.uk/c/literacy-outdoors/](http://www.creativestarning.co.uk/c/literacy-outdoors/)

\*“Recipe for a Woodland” is one of Joseph Cornell’s “Sharing Nature” activities which are available for free from [www.sharingnature.com](http://www.sharingnature.com)



Activity Type

Curriculum areas  
**Sciences, Arts**Length  
**30 – 45 mins**

# art or science?

Art and science often overlap – in the real world as well as the curriculum. From beautiful scientific images of natural history to the artistic creativity & imagination required for scientific progress, the line has been blurred.



## Woodland sounds

Wind rustling leaves, branches creaking, people walking, birds singing or moving in the undergrowth. What direction are the sounds coming from? How far away do they originate from?

Vibrations created by sharply tapping on living and dead wood produce a variety of sounds. Do all tree species sound the same? How can you tell the difference between living and dead wood other than sound?



## Shadow drawing

Observing the passing of time and the movement of the sun can be achieved together by putting a stick in the ground, marking the shadow and then returning after a short while to see how far the shadow has moved.

Make it more artistic by attaching a piece of white card to the stick, carefully trace the shadow of a plant and then come back to redraw it when it has moved. Use charcoal or soft pencils to give the drawings a 'shadowy' effect.

## Other ideas!

- > Move like a minibeast – it may take more than one person to get the correct number of legs though...
- > Make up a dance about a tree, a pigeon or some grass.
- > Set up a woodland theatre: string up a tarpaulin between some trees for a roof and there you have your natural stage – just as Shakespeare would have done!

❖❖❖ **Help make your school grounds more interactive...**

Eco-school [www.eco-schools.org.uk](http://www.eco-schools.org.uk)  
Grounds for Learning [www.ltl.org.uk](http://www.ltl.org.uk)



Activity Type

Curriculum areas  
**Arts, Technology,  
Sciences**Length  
**30 – 45 mins**

# wild art

**Andy Goldsworthy** – British artist living in Scotland known for being an ‘environmental or land artist’. His ethos is to create both temporary and permanent sculptures, using natural and found objects, which draw out the character of their environment.



Wild Art is a very versatile way to explore many different things. It can be used as a form of personal expression or be more focused.

Why not look at identifying patterns, highlighting colours or shapes in nature.

You could explore ways to view the natural world differently, to spark imagination for a later art session.

It doesn't just have to be 2-dimensional. 3-D structures and sculptures can be a great way to explore the properties of different materials!



Comprehension of abstract concepts can be assessed through the use of natural art.

This picture shows one group's understanding of 'The Water Cycle'. Taking a photograph of it provides a permanent record whilst the transient art just blows away...

## Other art ideas using natural materials

Puppets

Masks or Hats

Dreamcatchers

*"Talking to the Earth"* by Gordon MacLellan

... Environmental artists from the U.K.

Andy Goldsworthy [www.goldsworthy.cc.gla.ac.uk](http://www.goldsworthy.cc.gla.ac.uk)

Antony Gormley [www.antonygormley.com](http://www.antonygormley.com)

Tim Knowles [www.timknowles.co.uk](http://www.timknowles.co.uk)





Activity Type

Curriculum areas  
**Languages,  
Maths, Arts,  
Technology,  
Social Studies**

Length  
**45 – 60 mins**

# word art

**Richard Long** – English artist who is one of the best known ‘land artists’. Many of his works are based around walks that he has made and he uses the mediums of photography, text and maps to record the landscape he has walked over.

Using “walking as art” as the basis of his work, Richard Long chooses a unique route for each of his walks. These may be:

- **a force of nature** – such as always going with / against gravity or the wind
- **exploring a fixed area on a map** – for example, drawing ever-decreasing circles and walking only with that boundary for a set period of time. The areas Richard Long covered range from a few metres to many miles – but yours don’t have to!
- **a concept** – such as ‘One Hour’ and ‘White Light’ (see below)

## ONE HOUR



## WHITE LIGHT WALK

RED LEAVES OF A JAPANESE MAPLE  
ORANGE SUN AT 4 MILES  
YELLOW PARSNIPS AT 23 MILES  
GREEN RIVER SLIME AT 45 MILES  
BLUE EYES OF A CHILD AT 56 MILES  
INDIGO JUICE OF A BLACKBERRY AT 69 MILES  
VIOLET WILD CYCLAMEN AT 72 MILES

AVON ENGLAND 1987

Textworks by Richard Long

This approach is an excellent way to provide structure for word-gathering exercises or reinforcing abstract concepts. The words could be collected individually or as a group and then used to create poems or as a stimulus for creative writing.

## Land & Concept art...

Richard Long [www.richardlong.org](http://www.richardlong.org)

particularly the text works at [www.richardlong.org/textworks.html](http://www.richardlong.org/textworks.html)

Alec Finlay [www.alecfinlay.com](http://www.alecfinlay.com) – especially the animations

Chris Drury [www.chrisdrury.co.uk](http://www.chrisdrury.co.uk) for mushrooms, maps and clouds!



# evaluation

All evaluation should take place outside to ensure it is as relevant as possible. A 'Post-it' pad and pencil in the pocket are very handy for jotting down notes!



## Behaviour

"Observing children is simply the best way there is of knowing where they are, where they have been and where they will go next."

*Mary Jane Drummond, teacher and researcher in primary education*



## Art & craft

Using a 'wild art' activity as a reviewing tool at the end of a session will give you an opportunity to assess understanding of a topic or concept (this picture shows the Four Seasons).



## Sharing

Giving children time to share their achievements with the class gives them a chance to raise their self-esteem. It also helps you to explore the thinking and reasoning behind their work and reward the results. Speaking and listening skills will be practised as well.



## Group review

Working in small groups, children can feedback their findings on one element of the topic to the rest of the class.

## Books for Assessing Learning

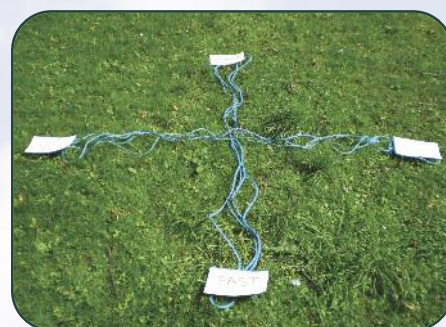
"Assessing Children's Learning: Primary" by Mary Jane Drummond

"Dialogues with Children" by Gareth Matthews

"Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach" by Alison Clark and Peter Moss



# assessment for learning



## Horseshoe

Helps assess achievement of goals and aims when outdoors without using paper. For example, the question “How well did we achieve ...?” could have answers ranging from ‘0’ (not at all) to ‘10’ (completely).

## Photo planning

Ask the children to take photographs in response to a specific question, stick them onto paper and add comments around them. This enables you to engage with the children in reflection, dialogue and decision-making.

## Activity map

By asking the children to stand in the area of the grid that represents them (feeling positive or negative about something in past or future), gives an opportunity for self-assessment or to discover how the class are feeling about a future new topic.

## Spokes

Asking children to feedback on everyone’s engagement with a session allows the young people to recognise the full range of their achievements and have their efforts appreciated by others. This technique requires a lot of trust for all involved.

**For full explanations of the techniques above and many more ideas for reviewing outdoors see...**

Dr Roger Greenaway’s “Active Reviewing Guide: over 100 ways to review experience and transfer learning” – [www.reviewing.co.uk](http://www.reviewing.co.uk)





# follow-up opportunities



**Nature Detectives** – 100's of free resources for, children, families and schools, including Leaf ID Sheets, Games and Outdoor Play ideas.



**Natures Calendar** – record your nature observations each spring and autumn and help us to record the impact of the changing climate on the natural world. This really is Real World Learning!



**Green Tree Schools Award** – rewards schools who take part in green activities including tree planting, recycling and reducing carbon emissions. It is free to participate in and open to all.



**The John Muir Award** – is an environmental award scheme focused on wild places. It encourages awareness and responsibility for the natural environment in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration.



**OWL Scotland** – is dedicated to increasing the use of Scotland's outdoor environments for learning. Learning outdoors, be in playgrounds, towns, cities, parks or our stunning natural environments, actively engages young people and connects their broader learning with the world around them.

**Council for Learning Outside the Classroom** – is the national voice for learning outside the classroom. We believe that every young person (0-19yrs) should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development, whatever their age, ability or circumstances.

## Bringing the outdoors in through cookery

Highlight local woodland produce:

Fruit = apples, pears, sloes, damsons

Berries = elderberry, blackberry, blueberry, raspberry

Nuts/Seeds = walnuts, sunflower

Flowers/Leaves = nettles, elderflowers, lime

## Ecological & Carbon footprints for schools

Education Scotland [education.scot/improvement/learning-resources/a-summary-of-learning-for-sustainability-resources/](https://www.education.scot/improvement/learning-resources/a-summary-of-learning-for-sustainability-resources/)

WWF Footprint Calculator [footprint.wwf.org.uk](https://www.footprint.wwf.org.uk)

Environmental footprint calculator

[www.greenschools.net](https://www.greenschools.net)

Ideas and resources to shrink your carbon

[www.carbondetectiveseurope.org](https://www.carbondetectiveseurope.org)



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## Scottish Gaelic and modern language tree names

ENGLISH	OLD GAELIC (ALPHABET)	MODERN GAELIC	FRENCH	GERMAN	SPANISH
alder	feàrn (F)	feàrna	verne	schwarze erlen	aliso
apple		mel, mal	pommier	apfel	manzano
ash	nuin (N)	craobh, uinnseann	frêne	esche	fresno
aspen	eagh, eadha (E)	critheann	peuplier tremble	espen temblón	álamo
beech		craobh fhaibhile	hêtre	buche	haya
silver birch	bieth (B) bieth bhog (P)	biethe, beatha dubhach	bouleau d'europe	silber birke	abedul
blackthorn		preas nan airneag	epine nior	schlehdorn	endrino
cherry		craobh, geanois	cerisier	kirsche	cerezo
chestnut		chraobh geannm-chno	châtaignier	kastanie	castaño
cypress		craobh bhròin	cypres	zypresse	ciprés
elder	ruis (R)	droman	sureau	holunder	saúco
elm	ailm (A)	leamham	orme	ulme	olmo
hawthorn	uath (H)	sgitheach	epine blanche	eingrifflicher weißdorn	majuelo
hazel	coll, coill (C)	càltnuinn, càlldainn, cailtin, colluinn	noisetier	haselnuß	avellano
holly		cuileann	houx	stechpalme	acebo
larch		laireag	mélèze	lärche	alerce
lime		craobh theile	tilleul	linde	limero, lima
oak	dair (D)	dur, dair, dàrach, dàrag, dùr, drù	chêne	eiche	roble
poplar		pobhuill	peuplier	pappel	àlamo
rowan	luis (L)	caorann	sorbier	eberesche	serbal de los cazadores
mountain ash					
Scots pine		peith, giùthas, giùbhas	pin sylvestre	föhrrer	pino
spruce		guithas lochlannach	epioéa	fichte	abeto
sycamore		craobh sice	sycomore	bergahorn	arce
willow	suil (S)	geal-sheileach	saule	weide	sauce
yew	iogh (I) / ur (U)	iuthar, iubhar, iughar	if	eibe	tejo

❖❖❖ If you would like to know more try...

Gaelic Alphabet – [www.gaelicmatters.com](http://www.gaelicmatters.com)

English to Gaelic Primer of Plant Names – [www.gaelic.snh.gov.uk/foillseachaidhean/faclan/index.jsp?start=A&end=C&lang=en](http://www.gaelic.snh.gov.uk/foillseachaidhean/faclan/index.jsp?start=A&end=C&lang=en)



# outdoor classroom resources

## Health & Safety

- > [Going Out There - A Scottish Framework for Safe Practice in Off-site Visits](http://www.goingoutthere.co.uk)  
[www.goingoutthere.co.uk](http://www.goingoutthere.co.uk)
- > "School Trips – Tackling the health and safety myths" Health and Safety Executive, 2011.  
Available from [www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.htm)

## FREE support from...

### The Woodland Trust:

- > [Nature Detectives resources now available at www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk](http://www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk)
- > Schools (lists all learning opportunities including free sapling packs for schools)  
[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/schools](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/schools)
- > Green Tree Schools Award  
[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/schools/green-tree-school-award/](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/schools/green-tree-school-award/)
- > Ancient Tree Hunt [www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk](http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk)

### Forestry Commission:

- > [www.owlsotland.org/](http://www.owlsotland.org/)
- > Outdoor and Woodland Learning [www.owlsotland.org/](http://www.owlsotland.org/)

### Other organisations:

- > Education Scotland, especially:  
*Outdoor Learning* [www.educationscotland.gov.uk/outdoorlearning](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/outdoorlearning)
- > Grounds for Learning [www.ltl.org.uk/](http://www.ltl.org.uk/)
- > RSPB Bird Identifier [www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdidentifier](http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdidentifier)
- > Wildlife TV (in case it rains!) [www.thewebbroadcastingcorporation.com](http://www.thewebbroadcastingcorporation.com)
- > Outdoor Learning Directory [www.outdoorlearningdirectory.com](http://www.outdoorlearningdirectory.com)
- > Outdoor Learning Wales [www.outdoorlearningwales.org](http://www.outdoorlearningwales.org)
- > Creative Star Learning especially 'I'm a Teacher get me Outside' blog [www.creativestarlearning.co.uk/](http://www.creativestarlearning.co.uk/)
- > Education for Sustainable Development Forum Northern Ireland [www.eefni.org.uk/](http://www.eefni.org.uk/)

## Books or resources packs (to buy)

- > "Earth & Snow Walks" by Steve Van Matre, The Institute for Earth Education UK
- > "Sharing Nature with Children – Part I & II" by Joseph Cornell, Deep Books
- > "Nature's Playground" by Fiona Danks & Jo Schofield
- > "Talking to the Earth" by Gordon MacLellan
- > "No Fear – Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society" by Tim Gill
- > "Natural Leaders: Environmental Games and Actives" by The National Trust for Scotland & Scottish Natural Heritage







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# outdoor classroom risk assessment

This outlines some of the more common risks associated with the outdoors – it is not comprehensive. Teachers must assess their own sites in accordance with their schools' risk assessment procedures and apply risk levels.

Hazard	Action
Sharp or prickly materials	Encourage long sleeves and sturdy footwear (not sandals) and discourage wearing shorts. Carry a First Aid kit.
Poisonous berries/fungi	Give verbal warning not to eat anything or put things/fingers in their mouths. Seek medical assistance if ingested. Wash hands carefully after the trip (especially before eating or drinking) or carry wet-wipes or antibacterial gel.
Low branches	Give verbal warning to take care (especially of eyes).
Uneven ground, holes, slopes, fallen branches	Advise to walk carefully. Wear suitable footwear and plan a route appropriate to the weather.
Children going out of sight/missing	Advise children on boundaries and give verbal warning. Adults to keep visual contact with their group. Correct ratios of adults:students. Have an agreed 'missing person' procedure that everyone is aware of, including an agreed meeting point in emergency situation.
General public	Avoid contact with strangers and animals where possible. Ask owners to control their animals if passing.
Insect bites/stings or allergies	Be aware of children with allergies (such as nuts, insect stings, hayfever). Check anyone with severe allergies has their asthma pump or epipen, and they are able to administer it. Remind everyone of the risk. Carry a First Aid kit. Tuck socks into trousers if in potential Tick area.
Dangerous Litter (i.e. Fly-tipped waste, broken glass, syringes)	Conduct safety sweep of area before activity takes place. Remind people of dangers and, if appropriate, show example.
Disease or infection – i.e. Toxocara canis (dog faeces), Tetanus (soil), Leptospirosis (rat urine in water), Lyme Disease (ticks)	Cover broken skin on hands (i.e. wear gloves), advise of risks and symptoms and seek medical advice a.s.a.p. if infection suspected. Tuck socks into trousers if in potential tick area.
Sun/ultra violet radiation	Advise of risks. Cover exposed skin, especially top of the head, back of the neck and shoulders. Work in the shade where possible.
Slippery surfaces	Warn about mud or ice. Change activity or route according to the weather. Wear appropriate footwear.
Electrical storms or gales force winds	Check weather websites for the latest information and severe weather warnings. Cancel activity if too severe.
Open water Have a throw line if working near deep or fast flowing water.	Verbal warning of danger area. Advise to keep clear of water's edge/banks.

**For further information and support visit:**

HSE [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) and NHS Health Library [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com)



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# daily hazard tick list

TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE  
THE START OF OR  
DURING EVERY OUTDOOR  
SESSION/ACTIVITY

Activity / Lesson \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Site / Area \_\_\_\_\_ Time completed \_\_\_\_\_

## HAZARDS IDENTIFIED

Hazard No.	Hazards	Hazard Identified
1	Moving traffic	yes / no
2	Hazardous materials or poisonous plants/berries/fungi	yes / no
3	Steep/slippery uneven surfaces	yes / no
4	Moving deep water	yes / no
5	Dog mess	yes / no
6	Overhanging branches/dead trees	yes / no
7	Uneven ground/hidden holes	yes / no
8	Fences and barbed wire	yes / no
9	Sharp objects	yes / no
10	Weather conditions (hot or cold)	yes / no
11	Other	yes / no
12	Other	yes / no

## CONTROL ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED

Control Actions  
(ERICPD)

Enter Hazard Number  
(next to Control Action implemented)

**Eliminate** – remove hazard

**Reduce** – change or alter activity environment

**Isolate** – restrict access to (or around) hazard

**Control** – change to a less hazardous activity

**PPE** – provide Personal Protective Equipment (i.e. gloves)

**Discipline** – training or advice e.g. point out hazard,  
give safety briefing

Other

Completed by \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_

## Go online

...and find out more about volunteering, events, activities and news from around the UK by visiting

**woodlandtrust.org.uk**

Lost a sheet? Contact us for new inserts or additional packs by emailing [enquiries@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@woodlandtrust.org.uk)



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### **The Woodland Trust**

Kempton Way  
Grantham  
Lincolnshire  
NG31 6LL

Tel: 0330 333 3300

E-mail: [enquiries@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@woodlandtrust.org.uk)

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

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