

## OUTDOOR PLAY

This factsheet explores why outdoor play is important, explains the types of play children engage in and how you can support your child when playing outside.

### APPLICABLE TO

Parents/carers

### KEY POINTS

The Statutory Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards for all registered childcare in England for children from birth until they start in Year 1 at school. The EYFS states that children need to have a daily outdoor experience. This means that in a childcare setting or school reception class your child will be outside at some stage every day. This could be in a specific play area or perhaps by taking part in nature walks or visiting parks.

Being outdoors has a positive impact on everyone's sense of well-being. As well as helping to keep us active, fit and healthy. Experiencing the outdoors also helps with all aspects of children's development.

Whilst outdoors children can play, explore and engage with the natural world. This gives children first-hand experience with changes in weather, seasons and nature. Discovering new sights, smells and nature including bugs, plants and trees is called active learning.

Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways and often on a larger scale than being indoors. Having opportunities to climb, swing, spin, run etc is another important part of child development. Children need to be confident to move in various ways and then build upon these skills to learn new, more advanced ones. Supporting your children through this progression will also teach them how to take small and managed risks. In other words children need to know what they are confident to do and what they need help with so that they do not put themselves in unnecessary danger.

In a childcare or school setting children may take part in 'Forest school' activities. The Forest School approach involves regularly visiting woodland or a wooded space allowing children to become familiar with and experience the outdoors. Children accessing Forest School activities are found to be calmer and more socially confident.



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?



You may be asked to provide wellies, a waterproof coat and to apply sun cream (if the weather is hot and sunny) so your child has suitable clothing for being outdoors in all weathers.

There will be policies, procedures and risk assessments for activities both onsite and offsite to ensure your child is safe. If you are concerned about any activities provided you can ask your key person for more information.

## HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD?

Can you investigate your local community, are there parks, woodland and beaches where you can take your child to play?

Being outdoors gives more space for children to play with balls, parachutes, to play hide and seek, to run, jump and climb. All of these opportunities allow children to take small risks safely with the freedom to make their own choices and further develop their physical skills.

Talk to your child about their day, for example, if they have been for a walk, ask what they saw (this extends your child's recall and communication skills whilst you are spending special social time together).

Look at and talk about the different trees, plants and animals you can see. Perhaps you can learn together what some of the plants and trees are

called – there are free downloads available (for example the Woodland Trust website).

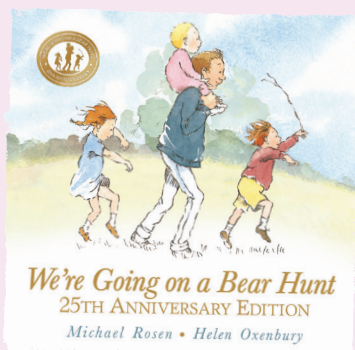
Create an edible garden (in pots or on a patio) so children can plant, grow and taste food. Do you know that you can grow potatoes in a large plastic bag? You can also plant sunflower seeds and watch them grow – why not measure them as they grow?

Have a basket or box of materials that can be used to make dens. For example, old bed sheets, scarves, cushions, clothes pegs, logs and stones.

Share books with your child about being outside. For example read "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" and then act out the story with your child.

Go outside as often as possible.

## RESOURCES



### STATUTORY GUIDANCE

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Loveoutdoorplay.net** – Love Outdoor Play is led by Play England and supported by the Free Time Consortium, a growing collective of local and specialist organisations working together to increase freedom to play.

**50things.org.uk** – A National Trust website aimed at children with a list of 50 things to do before you're 11¾

**Wildlifetrusts.org** – The Wildlife Trust has a special children's area on their website, and runs wildlife events locally.

**Forestry.gov.uk** – The Forestry Commission has information on Woodlands for Learning.

**Woodlandtrust.org.uk** – The Woodland Trust has lots of nature ideas and activities for children.

**www.foresteducation.org/woodland\_learning/forest\_schools**  
– You might like to explore Forest Schools and what your child does when participating in this type of activity.

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS

**Leaf Man** – Lois Ehlert

**Stanley's Stick** – Neal Layton and John Hegley

**Stick Man** – Julia Donaldson

**We're going on a Bear Hunt** – Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury