

“Home is where the *Start* is!”



Learning doesn't have to take place in a nursery or school. This booklet gives you some tips and ideas to keep your little ones happily learning at home - and out of doors during these unusual times!

‘Just like Nursery’.

Fun, learning activities you can do at home.

“Off your Marks!”

Fill a box with any available crayons, pencils, markers, notebooks, pens, envelopes, a ruler and spare note cards. This way, your child can set up a writing area wherever he/she wants to write.

Outdoor opportunities are enhanced by the provision of large clean DIY large paint brushes, car sponges and small buckets of water. Jumbo chalk is great for drawing on brick walls or paving stones too and can be used both wet and dry.

Let’s Pretend

Fill a box or basket with cloth pieces or drapes, hats, scarves, old jewellery, dressing up clothes, shoes etc. - in fact, the bigger the range of materials, the more exciting and imaginative your child can be! You could provide an additional bag or box to store things for different play themes. A small rack-sack, notebooks, paper, old phone and pens will support ‘office play’ for example, while a collection of kitchen utensils, a tray and toy tea set could lead to a pretend ‘café’. Let your child’s interests and imaginations guide their selection of clothes and props – and join in the play situation wherever you can.

Water play

Provide old basins, bubbles, food dye, sponges, dish-brushes, bath toys and other waterproof toys for floating and sinking, plastic jugs/cups/ sieves for pouring and emptying. The bath and the kitchen sink are logical locations, however, a small basin on the floor or on the garden path outside can also work (try placing the basin on a towel with a plastic bag cut open and spread beneath to catch spills).

‘Busy Hands’ Activities

Threading, using string or spare shoelaces and bobbins, jumbo beads – or even large pasta tubes, is great for developing the trickier handling skills for children developing their ‘hand-eye coordination’. There are lots of excellent ideas online which show how to make fun activities using everyday household objects such as standing drinking straws or spaghetti

strands upright in Blu-tak and then giving the child some breakfast hoops to thread on to them, to make towers. Try filling a tray or tub with cotton wool balls or buttons and give your child a small pair of serving tongs to transfer these down a kitchen roll tube into a second container. It's lots of fun, quite challenging - and great for developing concentration too 😊

Small World Play

Children love to get started on any game involving toy cars, trains, diggers and emergency vehicles, miniature dolls, farm and safari animals. Empty boxes are good for pretend houses and garages - and children can have fun drawing roads and tracks on large pieces of cardboard or paper to adapt or add to their playscapes! Wooden blocks are a good accessory too: children can create buildings and make signs to go with them if you keep a pad and pencils nearby too.

Making and Doing

Keep a box handy with different types of paper, drawing and painting materials. Provide if you can, small pictures from old magazine/catalogue pages, or coloured paper wrappings cut into small pieces. Old greeting card fronts are a firm favourite - but anything that can be cut up and stuck down to create a picture will work. Add safety scissors and glue sticks, so that children can make collages or experiment with other art techniques.

Numbers and Shapes

Include any board games and puzzles your child may have. Add empty, clean, egg cartons or ice cube trays and materials for sorting, like buttons or old bottle tops. Add materials that children can use in inventing their own games—paper, crayons, and dice, along with pennies or buttons to use as player pieces. Add a ruler, a tape measure, and other items for measuring size and distance.

Books and Stories

Gather any favourite books or magazines your child enjoys in a basket or shopping bag that can be carried around the house or even outdoors. At bedtime your child can move the book basket near her/his bed for easy bedtime reading. Download free story books from: <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/have-some-fun/storybooks-and-games/>

Try to make time throughout the day to enjoy a story and a cuddle with your child. It will do you both so much good – and it's one of the best ways for your child to learn new words and phrases! Use some scrap paper tied or stapled together and try making a book together! Your child can draw pictures on each page and tell you what is happening, and you can perhaps write the simple story using the child's own words underneath.

Ready, Steady, Cook!

Store a child-size apron, a collection of favourite recipes, and unbreakable bowls and utensils in a kitchen drawer or bottom cupboard. Invite your children to join in while you prepare meals and snacks. There is so much learning to be had as you talk about 'more' or 'less', 'full' and 'empty', count out each spoonful or share the cake mixture between the paper cases, for example.

Involve your little helper at every stage where it is safe to do so. They love having the responsibility of carrying out real and valuable tasks! Use this time also to talk to your child about healthy choices when deciding on snack time or meal options, and to get them into the habit of washing their hands thoroughly before and after handling foodstuffs.

'Make Beautiful Music Together!'

Use oatmeal containers, old yogurt cups, and other materials you have on hand to make homemade instruments (like a rain-stick or a drum) with your children. Store these instruments in a box and add other items, like castanets or maracas. Children love to create music while singing with family members or making up silly songs together.

Employ your very own 'Learning Detective'!

Develop your child's curiosity about the world around them by filling a small box with a few investigation tools, such as magnets, a magnifying glass or binoculars along with a clipboard, paper, and crayons or pencils. Not every home will have things like this to hand, but you can also make pretend binoculars or a spy-glass out of cardboard tubes and encourage your child to spot and collect natural items when they are outdoors which you then invite them to look at more closely. Ask questions such as "What do you think might happen if?" or "where do you think that might have come from" to help them to make connections, observe details or changes, and make predictions.

Two for a Story - Stories for younger children

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/have-some-fun/storybooks-and-games/>

The book trust site has several books online, which parents can download for free. We particularly recommend 'Owl Babies', 'Rumble in the Jungle' and 'Every bunny dance'.

Other great books:

Oh Dear! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOzLKTijH0g>

I'm Not Scary! All by Rod Campbell

Dear Zoo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rudDGRQ9QGA>

Brown Bear, Brown Bear by Bill Martin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WST-B8zQleM>

One mole digging a hole/ Fox's Socks/ Postman Bear/ Hide and Seek Pig/ Rabbit's Nap
by Julia Donaldson

<https://www.gruffalo.com/songs>

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

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

You Choose by Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharratt

Shark in the park by Nick Sharratt

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2RwvAHUAdc>

Dinosaur Roar by Paul and Henrietta Stickland

<https://www.dinosaurroar.com/activities>

Each Peach Pear Plum by Janet and Allan Ahlberg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oyt50ZoM3G8>

'Wow said the Owl' by Tim Hopgood

We're going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgyI6ykDwds>

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rg3wIOOPRe0>

'Dig, Dig, Digging!' and 'Emergency!' By Margaret Mayo

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

Enjoying learning in the Great Outdoors!

During these difficult and unusual times, it's more important than ever before that, where you can, you and your child spend time outside in the fresh air. If you have a garden of your own, then you are probably already making the most of this outdoor space to keep your child happily engaged in lots of outdoor play activities.

While observing Government guidance on the need for daily exercise, and mindful of social distancing measures, getting outside into local woodlands or open spaces has never been more important for the physical and mental well-being of adults and children alike. Apart from the health benefits, this daily walk with your family presents so many learning possibilities for your child – and so Vicky, our Forest School Leader, has put together some exciting ideas for outdoor activities and nature projects which we know you will all enjoy!

Parents are natural teachers, but that doesn't mean you have to be an expert on everything in the natural world! Just take your child outdoors and let them lead the learning. You are there to keep them safe, encourage them, provide support where needed - and get involved as much as you can with your child's learning discoveries.

Making 'sense' of the natural world!

Children learn by using all of their senses, so encourage this as much as possible as you explore the environment of your garden, local woods or other permitted outdoor spaces. Remember that not every activity needs a pen and paper to make learning happen – absolutely anything that can be learned indoors, can be learned outdoors.

Getting outside and into nature whenever we can is so good for us grown-ups too! Research tells us that the sights, sounds and smells of nature contribute positively to our general well-being.

When our nervous systems are on high alert, the senses are working very hard. We may feel more tired – every family is different, so try and build into each day a few simple ideas based on using all five senses which will really help you and your family cope during the weeks ahead:



Taste:

Make a hot chocolate and sit in the garden for a while to drink it; have a picnic in the garden.

Touch:

Have a treasure box of different things from the garden to touch: pinecone, soft leaf, feathers; or build a simple den/shelter (use a clothes horse, or the washing line!) and snuggle-up inside.

http://www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk/activities/pdfs/pdf_texture_hunt.pdf –

Smell:

Go outside, smell the plants, flowers and herbs you find, make a smelly cocktail –

<http://7474fab53f1b6ee92458-8f3ac932bad207a00c83e77eae8d15c.r12.cf1.rackcdn.com/WILD-COCKTAIL.jpg>

Hear:

Quietly sit in the garden and create a spot where you and your child can simply just sit and hear all the sounds around you. Listen for bird song; sing a song together outside, listen to the wind – younger children might only listen for a minute, but you can challenge older children to listen for longer. Listen for differences each time, make a sound map

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/sit%20spot.html>

or a wind-chime!

http://www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk/activities/pdfs/pdf_woodland_wind_chimes.pdf

See:

Make a place outside or in your garden where you can create a small retreat, a place where you or your child can escape to during these challenging times where most people are spending a lot of time at home. It is also a great place to store special finds from nature walks!

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/nature-frames.html>

Here are some more great sensory ideas:

<http://www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk/activitymenu/?cat=scavenger>

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/>

Information about nature and mindfulness:

These sites also provide useful tips and ideas to try, such as growing food, bringing nature inside, helping the environment.

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/nature-and-mental-health/how-nature-benefits-mental-health

- and for the grown-ups, why not try this NHS approved mindfulness course:
www.bemindfulonline.com

Places to go, things to do!

Many of these activities can be done at home, in the garden, from a window or balcony – or in a more remote woodland location, such as Booker Woods or the Rye if you can get to them. Remember to follow Government advice which currently permits us to exercise and walk in green spaces and woodlands, whilst following ‘social distancing’ measures (keeping at least two metres away from other people).

Try some of these outdoor learning ideas from the **Woodland Trusts’ Nature Detectives** which can be found here:

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

You might also take a look at the **Wildlife Watch** website:

<https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/activity-sheets>

Here are a few examples from this site to try, which can be done at home or in the garden:

Nature's music



Nature is full of great opportunities in turning natural objects into musical instruments...

Maracas

You will need

- An empty, clean tin can (with the label removed)
- A balloon
- Elastic bands
- A handful of seeds, rice, lentils, nuts or small stones



- 1 Put your loose materials into your tin can.
- 2 Stretch the balloon over the open end of the tin.
- 3 Once in place, secure it with elastic bands.
- 4 Give it go - shake your maraca!

Be careful of sharp edges.



Grass whistle

You will need

- A wide blade of grass
- Your two thumbs



- 1 Hold the grass taut between your thumbs.
- 2 Blow into the gap between your thumbs until you hear a whistle.



If you don't hear anything at first, try re-positioning the grass between your thumbs. Don't worry - it can take a bit of practice!



www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

Make a butterfly painting



You will need

- Water-based paints
- Brushes
- Pastel coloured paper paper
- Marker pen
- Plenty of newspaper (to cover tables!)



- 1 Fold a piece of paper in half, side to side, and open it out.
- 2 Paint the shape of butterfly wings on one half. Fold the paper over again and press it down.
- 3 Open out the paper and add more colours to the other side. Refold and press.
- 4 When the butterfly wings are dry, add a body and antennae with a marker pen.



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- 3 Open out the paper and add more colours to the other side. Refold and press.



- 4 When the butterfly wings are dry, add a body and antennae with a marker pen.



Or make a minibeast home:

How to build hidey holes



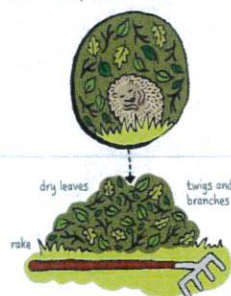
For amphibians

In a damp, cool area of the garden, dig a shallow bowl in the ground and line with sand. Cover with a slab, leaving enough room for an upward sloping tunnel.



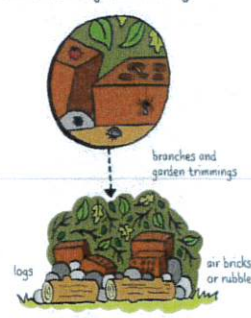
For hedgehogs

Rake a pile of dry leaves in a quiet, unused corner of the garden (under a bush is best). Build a mesh of twigs and branches around the pile, and leave an entrance space at the bottom.



For minibeasts

Stack up a log pile as the bottom layer and cover with rubble or bricks (air bricks have ready made hidey holes!) Cover the pile with branches and garden cuttings.

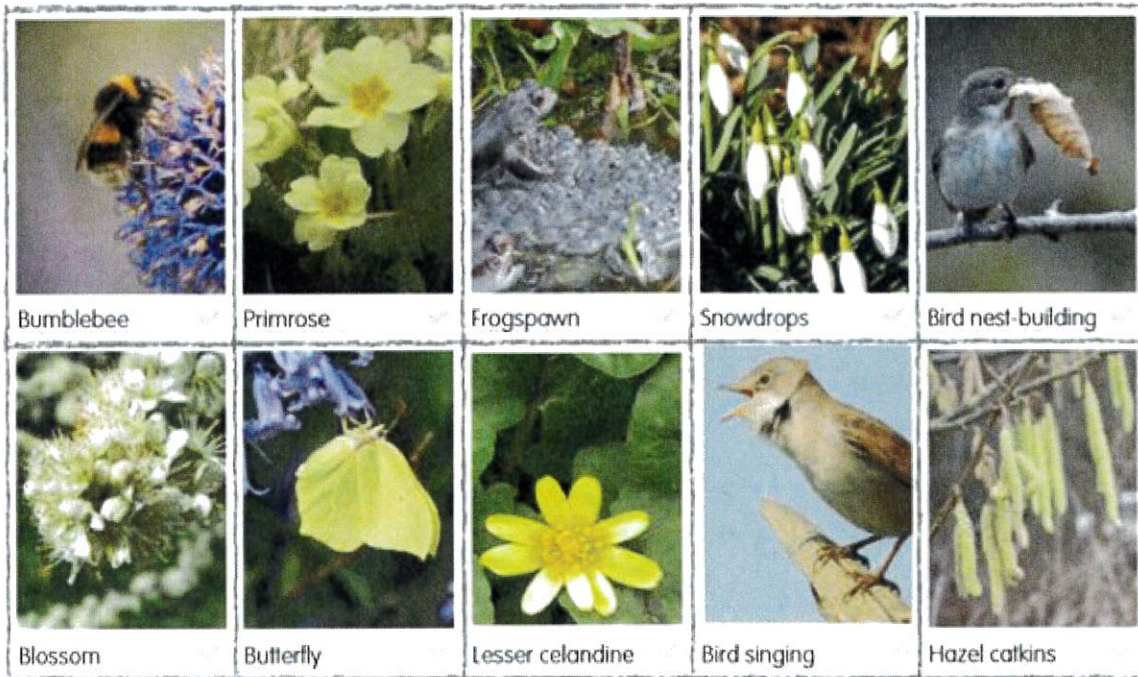


www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

See what you can spot on a spring walk:

(<https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/images/Downloads/spotters/signsofspring1.pdf>)

Signs of Spring Spotter



<https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/images/Downloads/spotters/yellow%20springtime%20flowers.pdf>

Yellow springtime flowers



Why not take this checklist with you on your stroll around the garden or in your local neighbourhood on your daily walk?



Spring Hunt Checklist

☐


blossom

☐


seedling

☐


flower
bud

☐


flower

☐


daffodil

☐

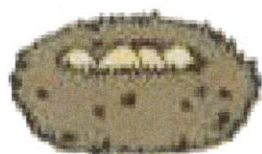

insect

☐

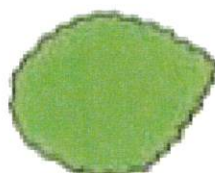

bird

☐


squirrel

☐


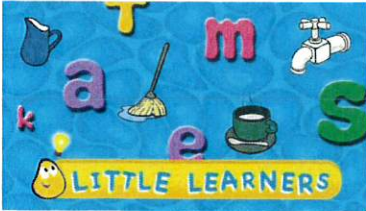
nest

☐


green leaf



...and finally, here are some further useful websites you might like to visit for advice and more ideas. Enjoy and please stay safe!

	'Nurse Dotty and Dave the Dog'	A sensitively written and reassuring story for young children explaining the Corona Virus in a way that helps them make sense of these unusual times. https://nursedottybooks.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/dave-the-dog-coronavirus-1-1.pdf
	Topmarks	Interactive Educational Games https://www.topmarks.co.uk
	Early Learning HQ	Contains a collection of educational Early Years flash games https://www.earlylearninghq.org.uk/class-management/interactive-games/
	Family Learning	Contains links to pre-school games http://www.familylearning.org.uk/preschool-games.html
	Oxford Owl Oxford University Press	Free resources and activities, including e-books for all ages to support learning at home https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/
	CBeebies 'Little Learners'	Fun activities and games arranged into learning areas and interests https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/topics

	BBC Bitesize	updating daily with new educational activities across all age ranges https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize
 Naturally Learning Where children grow	Naturally Learning	50 fun activities to do outside with little ones www.earlylearninghq.org.uk/earlylearninghq-blog/outdoor-play-activities-and-ideas-part-1
	RSPB #Breakfast Birdwatch	From 8am to 9am each day, observing the birds in your garden. https://www.rspb.org.uk/
	Twinkl Home Learning Hub	A collection of resource packs, games and challenges for parents to use with younger children https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/home-early-years/home-early-years-home-learning
	Twinkl learning resources site	Temporary access and free membership while the schools are shut. Use this code to set it up: UKTWINKLHELPS www.twinkl.co.uk/offer
	Audible by Amazon	Free streaming of children's stories to your desktop, laptop, phone or tablet while schools are closed https://stories.audible.com/start/listen
	Phonics Play	Currently available to non-subscribers using the following details: Username: march20 Password: home https://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/#