



Outdoor play equipment can cost huge amounts of money but can also cost nothing and provide just as much fun.

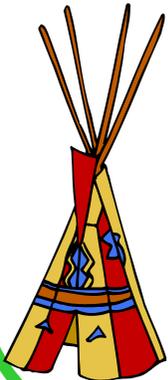


Start to make collections of bits and pieces of equipment that will be useful for outdoor play, such as a milk crate, rope and string, sheets and old curtains or a picnic blanket, pegs, a clothes airer, boxes, buckets, paintbrushes, hose pipes and drainpipes, plants, seeds, leaves, cones...just about anything that you have in the home will be a prop for outdoor play.



This booklet offers some ideas but there are so many more activities if you let your imagination go.

If you would like specific information or advice on outdoor play, particularly regarding risk-taking please ask a member of staff.



# Help your child at home... Outdoor Play



**Garretts Green  
Nursery School**

## The value of outdoor play

Outdoor play is seen in Nursery School and Early Years' settings as an extension of the classroom and is often referred to as 'the outdoor classroom'



The benefits to your child of outdoor play are enormous and cover all areas of learning and development as well as health and well-being.

- Children develop social skills during outdoor play.
- They learn to take turns and to work together to solve problems that require perseverance and determination.
- They make friends, discover likes and dislikes and learn to become independent.
- Children develop a positive self-image and their well-being improves which has an impact on their learning.
- They talk to each other, express needs and share ideas and build on each other's plans.
- They learn to negotiate and talk through their ideas, modifying what they want to do in light of others' talk.
- Children learn to solve problems and work as a team.
- They develop fine and gross motor skills
- They find out about the natural world and how living things survive.
- Children develop imagination and creativity.
- They learn tolerance and develop a caring attitude.
- They are physically active and use up all that excess energy
- They develop healthy attitudes to exercise and to a healthy lifestyle
- Above all else, they learn that learning is FUN!

## Last but not least.....

- Make some perfume with garden flowers and water mixed together 
- Have a picnic
- Hide some treasure and have a treasure hunt.
- Plant flower seeds such as nasturtiums (which almost always grow quickly) or some wild flower seeds
- Make a grass trumpet (Put the grass over your thumb and blow)
- Plant some radishes or herbs 
- Go out and forage for blackberries and make a blackberry and apple pie
- Find a snail and watch it eating a leaf
- Make a tiny pond in a storage box sunk into the ground. Put a stone inside to let any frogs get out and then stand back and wait
- Count or tally ladybirds
- Give your child their own garden
- Make a compost heap with scraps of fruit and vegetables, used compost from old pots, shredded paper and grass cuttings.
- Sweep up leaves 
- Throw some snow and make a snowman
- Take a cutting from a plant such as a hydrangea
- Wash old toys in a bowl of water
- Make some bunting
- Read a story or tell a story with sound effects
- Make a daisy chain. 

## The National Trust

### Things to do !

The National Trust has published a list of fifty different things a child should do before they leave primary school.

The list can be found on the National Trust website:

[nationaltrust.org.uk/50things](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/50things)

It includes making a den, making mud pies, catching a butterfly with a net, catching a fish, looking in a rock pool, climbing a tree, flying a kite, rolling down a hill and eating an apple directly from a tree.

There are also lots of links to other sites that give safety tips and advice.



## Never mind the weather!

Adults are far more worried about the effects of the weather than children! It really doesn't matter what the weather is like— it shouldn't stop children from having fun outdoors unless the child has an underlying medical condition such as asthma which may be triggered by some conditions.

It is said that there is no such thing as bad weather... only bad clothes! If your child is dressed in appropriate clothes it will benefit him or her to be outside. Wellies and a warm water-proof coat are essential for winter play and water-proof trousers are a bonus.

In the summer you will need to follow strategies for safe exposure to sun—a hat, preferably with a visor and something to cover the neck as well as sun screen are all sensible. Plenty to drink is also advisable as children do not realise when they are over-heating.

Make the most of the changes we see in the weather. Talk about the patterns made by the frost, the shapes in the clouds, the rainbows in puddles at the side of the road.

Have fun outdoors.

## Rainy Days



### Splash in a puddle!

Put on those wellies and go and splash in the puddles. What happens to the water? Go out and splash with your child! Make puddles if it's dry outside-tip a bucket of water onto a path or patio.

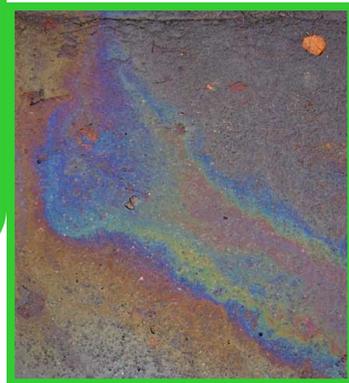


### Mud pies

Use an old bucket and a trowel and make some mud pies. Mix water and soil together if there isn't any mud available. What happens if it's too wet? What happens if we leave it to dry out?

### Rainbow puddles

Look out for rainbows in puddles made when petrol on the road mixes with the rain.



## Water Play

### Tubes and pipes

Make a collection of little buckets, bits of drain pipes of different lengths and a couple of milk crates or boxes that can be used to make different levels. Fill a bowl or a bucket with water and place it on a box. Now put an empty bowl or bucket on the floor and see if you and your child can transfer the water from one container to another.

### Water Day

On a hot sunny day, set up a series of water activities. You could use bowls, buckets, a paddling pool, a plastic table cloth covered in water, large sponges, a hose pipe, etc.  
Never leave a child unattended with wa-



### Water the garden

Allow your child to water the garden using buckets of water. If you have a water butt use the collected rain water.

### Filling and emptying

Collect containers for filling, emptying and pouring. A large bucket will hold enough water for your child to have fun and learn.

## Get moving!

### Obstacles!

Make an obstacle course using a length of rope or washing line laid on the floor to walk along, an old ladder flat on the floor for stepping over, a crate to step up and down, a hoop for jumping in and out and a space to run, hop, skip, jump.

### Climb a hill. Roll down.

These are things that National Trust say that every child should do. Try to find a grassy slope in a park. It needn't be huge but make sure that if the children are going to roll down they can stop safely at the bottom!



### Go swimming

Most children love to go to the swimming baths. It doesn't matter if they haven't learnt to swim, the important thing is to have fun, learn not to fear water and be active.

Many council pools will organise swimming parties for birthdays which are also a good way of encouraging all age groups to swim.

## Sunny Days



### Make a rope ladder

Children love to climb. Make a rope ladder by tying some knots in a heavy rope and using these to climb up, maybe into a small tree. **NEVER** leave your child alone with rope.

### Make a tray garden

Use a tin lid or a small tray or box and make a garden. Use twigs, stones, leaves and flowers as well as small plants. Sprinkle some grass seed or cress and leave to grow. Marbles or glass pebbles used in vases are an interesting addition. Silver foil makes a good pond.

Be creative.

### Make a leaf print

You will need pieces of white cotton fabric and some soft leaves. Place the leaves on a piece of fabric and then place another piece on top, making a sandwich. Now use a rolling pin or any smooth object that can apply some pressure and roll it over the fabric. The green colour will appear on the fabric and make a print. Leave to dry.

## Autumn Days

### Weaving

Make a frame with some sticks tied together and weave wool, twigs, feathers, leaves, seed-heads, flowers and any natural materials that are available.

You can buy willow hoops and balls to weave but your own efforts are just as effective

Jump in the autumn leaves!



### Make an autumn collection

What can you find in the garden or park that you only see in the autumn? Make a collection of cones and see how different they are. You can save them in a dry place and decorate at Christmas.

Light a bonfire-stand well away!

### Feed the birds

Make some bird feeders using a block of lard, sunflower seeds, nuts and commercial bird food. Mix together in a bowl. Using an empty yoghurt pot thread string through the base. Fill the yoghurt pot and hang in the trees or from a bird table.

## All about bugs!

### Bug Hunt!

Go on a bug hunt in the garden or park. Use clear containers and a magnifying glass for a closer look. You could make a bug chart on a wet day ready for your bug hunt-cut pictures from a magazine or print photographs off the internet. See how many lady-birds you can find etc.



### Bug Hotel

Use some logs or a wooden box to make a bug hotel. Pile the wood up but fit a plant pot here and there amongst the wood for bugs to hide in. Terracotta pots are best. Loosely roll up some newspaper and fit that in too. Old bits of drain pipe are useful too. You will need to leave the hotel for a while for the bugs to make their homes.

### Make a den

You don't need any special equipment to make a den. There are lots of possibilities:

- Use some long sticks to make a tripod and throw an old sheet around then to make a wigwam.
- Tie a sheet or an old curtain between the branches of two trees.
- Use a clothes airer draped with a sheet or curtain.
- Tie a sheet to the back of a bench and fasten down the other end with a log or stone.
- Drape a curtain over a washing line and fix to the fence.
- Winter dens can be made with a white sheet or blanket to look like snow.

The possibilities are endless and just require a few basic materials such as sheet or curtain, some pegs or some string and anything you have available to fasten the den to. It all depends on what you have. Be creative!

Don't forget ... If you have cut down trees or pruned shrubs children love to make dens with natural materials.



### Spring Sunshine

#### Potatoes

Plant some potatoes so that your child can dig them up and eat them in the autumn. They need to be left to 'chit' first of all— leave them in a shed to begun to show signs of shoots developing before you



#### Water painting

With old paintbrushes and a bucket of water, let your child paint faces, his or her name, flowers, etc. No paint is involved and when the water dries there's no mess left behind. They can paint the floor or walls this way.



#### Traditional Games

Play hopscotch by chalking on the floor. Use a large pebble. Or try 'What's the time, Mr Wolf?' Teach your child to skip without a rope first of all.



## Snowy Days

### Footprints in the snow

Make prints in the snow before you take your child outside. Use a potato or swede to make a print and repeat the foot prints –what has made the footprints in the snow? Look at yours and your child's footprints. How are they different?

### Dance in the snowflakes

As the snow starts to fall go out and dance amongst the snowflakes.



### Snow-people

No matter what you do, one of the most exciting things for young children that you must do is build a snowman or woman. Use old clothes to dress the snow people and different fruits and vegetables for the nose, etc.

### Ice sculptures

Freeze some water in unusual containers such as small buckets, yoghurt pots, ice-cube trays, even an old shoe.

A rubber glove filled with water and left to freeze makes a great sculpture when the glove is peeled away.

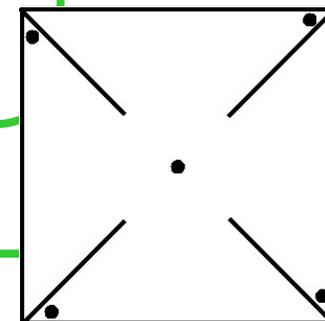
## Windy Day

### Fly a kite

Find a safe place to fly a kite. You could make your own kite or buy a kite. Make sure there are no overhead power lines anywhere near you. The beach, the park or countryside are the best places to go.

### Wind chimes and hangings

Hang a collection of objects on thread: leaves, cones, conkers, seeds, twigs along with any old spoons or knives and forks that are ready to be recycled. Hang from the branches of a tree.



### Make a windmill

Use a strong piece of paper, a stick and a small pin or tack to make a windmill. Decorate the paper and cut it according to the diagram then fold the dots to the centre and pin to the stick.