

Top tips for Outdoor Classroom Day

Outdoor Classroom Day is a day for children everywhere to enjoy learning and playing outside the classroom. Schools are pledging to spend at least one lesson outside and Play Wales is encouraging schools to commit the day to play.

Here are our top tips for a playful Outdoor Classroom Day!

- 1** You don't need a detailed plan of activities. If you can take a step back and supervise from a distance, children will be more likely to play in their own way and gain the benefits of experimenting and experiencing things for themselves.
- 2** Loose parts are defined as natural and man-made materials that have no specific purpose. Ask parents and colleagues to help by collecting resources such as: fabric, guttering, cardboard boxes and tubes, tyres, sticks, tarpaulins, string and rope. Children get very creative when left to play with these resources. Find out more about providing loose parts to support children's play in our toolkit:
www.playwales.org.uk/eng/publications/loosepartstoolkit
- 3** Children have a fascination with nature so think about resources that allow children to explore the four elements in their play:
 - **Earth** – mud pies, sand, clay or digging
 - **Air** – kites, bubbles, balloons or flags
 - **Fire** – candle decorating, toasting marshmallows or campfire cooking
 - **Water** – hosepipes, buckets, sponges or watering cans.
- 4** Make sure children are well equipped by informing parents of your plans. Encourage children to wear old clothes and be prepared for whatever the weather.
- 5** Make sure parents understand this is a different sort of day and that their children are likely to get dirty. This is a great opportunity to remind parents that playing outside and getting dirty is really beneficial for children's physical and emotional well-being.
- 6** If you provide children with enough **time** they will play and get creative. Consider setting at least half of Outdoor Classroom Day for play.
- 7** If you provide children with **permission** to play they are more likely to play in their own way. You may need to agree some broad boundaries with supervising adults but otherwise allow children to decide what is appropriate by stepping back.

- 8** If you provide children with enough **space**, it will support a range of play experiences. If you have a school field, this is the time to make use of it! If you don't have a field, think about other spaces which could be used – such as the car park or visit somewhere nearby with plenty of room to explore and play.
- 9** If you have a local play development team, get in touch with them as they may be able to advise you on ideas to make Outdoor Classroom Day a playful one. You can find out who to contact on Play Wales' website: www.playwales.org.uk/eng/playservices
- 10** Have fun. Dedicating Outdoor Classroom Day to play should be fun for children and adults. Step back and observe the incredible experiences children have whilst playing, observe them learning, negotiating and enjoying themselves.
- 11** Finally, ask the children what they thought of the day. If it was successful, think about how you can integrate more time for outdoor experiences every day.



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