



Nature Play



Should you wish a copy of our free Messy Play booklet please contact Sharon at info@playscotland.org

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PlayScotland
Level 1, Rosebery House
9 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5EZ

Tel: 0131 313 8859
Email: info@playscotland.org
www.playscotland.org

Scottish Charity Number SC029167
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"As children, we need time to wander, to be outside, to nibble on icicles, watch ants, to build with dirt and sticks in the hollow of the earth, to lie back and contemplate clouds...."

Gary Paul Nabhan & Stephen Trimble (2004)

You don't have to spend money to let your child reap the benefits of playing outdoors.

Playing outdoors gives children the opportunity to explore nature and enjoy the natural environment through their own free play, experience the benefits of fresh air, and absorb that all important Vitamin D which they need for healthy development.

We have listed below some creative and messy play ideas:

Make a Stick Sword

What you need: Two sticks in different lengths (one for the sword and one for the handle), string.

What to do: Place the smaller stick near to the top of the long stick, width ways, and bind with string.

Catch a bug or a crab at the beach!

Make a Mud House

What you need: Old tea loaf tins/plastic box, spade, thick mud (you can make goeey mud thicker by adding sand), grass/weeds, muscles!

What to do: Fill the tin with mud and grass/weeds (this helps with consistency), turn over and tap out your brick... continue until you have your den!



Indian headdress

What you need: Feathers – make sure these are washed first, thick card, glue

What to do: Cut card into a thin strip the circumference of your head and glue end together. Glue feathers onto card. Why not paint the head band in bright colours?

Fun with Pebbles

Make Dominos

What you need: lots of smooth stones/pebbles, poster paint

What to do: Paint stones in various colours and use black paint for spots



You can also make stone faces and animals.

Have fun with words

- paint the vowels in different colours



Stamping

Why not collect lots of nature's items, i.e. pine cones, leaves, twigs, etc and use these as a stamp for painting, see what shapes they all make.

Scavenger Hunts

These are great fun and free! What you have to do is find the items on your list. We have listed below a few ideas, which are grouped in seasons:

Winter - Collect: winter berries on a stick; holly leaves; pine needles; pine cones; a twig shaped in the letter Y; something in: red, brown and green.

Look out for: a tree with no leaves; an evergreen tree; moss on a tree; animal tracks in the snow or mud; ice or frost.

Spring – Collect: blossom; moss; crunchy leaves; mushroom; find items which are: orange, red, green, white, blue, pink, yellow and brown.

Look out for: bluebells; snowdrops; daffodils; caterpillars; bird nests (please don't touch eggs); frogspawn; bats; worms; slugs.

Summer – Collect: Daisy (you can make a daisy chain); Blackberries (yum but please wash first); Buttercup (if you place the buttercup under someone's chin and it shines yellow it means they like butter – why not try it and see!); dandelion clock (did you know that if you catch a seed from the clock you have to make a wish and then blow it away?); feathers; a leaf in red, green, yellow.

Play Activity - Dandelions produce invisible ink!! Cut the bottom of the stem and draw on a piece of paper using the sap and leave to dry.

Look out for: butterflies; frogs; bees; wasps; ladybirds; ants.

Autumn – Collect: chestnuts (then open them to find a conker); pine cones; acorns; see how many different colours of leaves you can collect; a winged seed; a doc leaf.

Play Activity – get an adult to help you pierce a hole in the conker and thread through some string and play conkers.

Beach Scavenger Hunts

Try and find: 5 different types of shells; a crab; seaweed; mussels; winkles; driftwood; find items which are: red, yellow, pink, blue, orange, purple, green and brown.

Tip – Paint colour charts are great for matching nature items against, cut a variety of colours out and paste onto sheets of paper and ask your child to find items which match.

