

Children at Play in the Great Outdoors

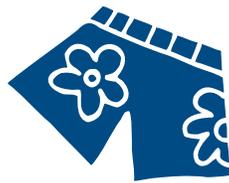
Children of all ages love to be outside. Throughout the seasons, they explore their environments. They learn how the weather changes, and how animals and plants are affected by these changes. In learning about the seasons, children begin to understand nature's cycles. Below are some simple activities that children can choose among and enjoy when outdoors.

Things for children to do...



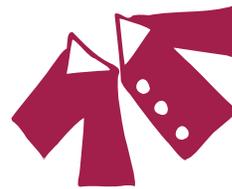
...in spring

- Plant a garden outside with flowers and vegetables.
- Put a bird bath and a bench in the centre of the garden for sitting and observing.
- Incubate and hatch eggs.
- Prepare and observe an ant farm.
- Put earthworms in a jar of loose earth and feed with small amounts of lettuce.
- Visit a farm and see the new baby animals.
- Fly kites on a windy day.
- Walk in the rain and watch for a rainbow.
- Visit a pond, lake or river to find frog eggs and tadpoles.
- Find pussy willows, new grass, blossoms, wind and air currents.
- Pick bouquets of flowers from your garden.
- Plant flowers in a window box.
- Rake the yard and sprinkle fresh grass seed.



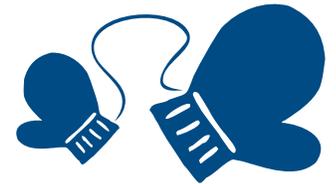
...in summer

- Pick strawberries, raspberries and blueberries, and compare their size, colour, shape, odour and taste.
- Pick vegetables and compare shapes, sizes and tastes.
- Weed and water a garden.
- Set up a tent in the back yard and go camping.
- Play at a water table with pouring utensils, troughs and sailing boats.
- Play in sand with pails, sieves, funnels and shovels.
- Play under a sprinkler.
- Look for insects and butterflies. Learn their names and habits.
- Pick daisies, cornflowers and other wildflowers.
- Visit a pond, lake, river or stream, and feed the fish, ducks and other wildlife.
- Collect natural materials like acorns, leaves, sea shells or special rocks.
- Attend outdoor events like fairs, concerts, music festivals and art shows.
- Pack a picnic to enjoy in the yard or further afield.
- After dark, catch fireflies in a jar and observe the stars.



...in fall

- Take a walk to observe how the world is changing.
- Clean out the garden, dig up the soil for spring and protect delicate plants. Plant bulbs.
- Pick vegetables and fruits. Make jams, pickles and applesauce.
- Talk about the north-south migration of birds, the hibernation of animals, and why some trees lose their leaves and others keep theirs.
- Find a milk pod ready to seed. Blow the seeds.
- Pick corn and compare the different types: popcorn, corn-on-the-cob, canned, frozen and cream-style. Pop some corn together.
- Weigh vegetables with a kitchen scale: a pumpkin, an apple, a nut, themselves!
- Watch birds fly south and find their direction on a compass.
- Rake leaves and play in them.
- Talk and learn about gravity. Think about falling leaves and apples.



...in winter

- Shovel walks and bicycle paths.
- Shovel snow onto a sleigh and pull it to another area and use it to make snow sculptures.
- Observe the temperature both indoors and outdoors with an indoor-outdoor thermometer. Have children compare temperatures for differences and similarities, from day to day.
- Slide down a nearby hill. Make sleighs by cutting cardboard squares from packing boxes.
- Play follow-the-leader in fresh snow, following the leader's footsteps in the snow. Make circles, zigzags, and hop and jump.
- Make lots of snowballs to toss into a basket or box.
- Make a bird feeder from an empty carton or plastic container. Fill it with bird seeds and hang it from a branch, then watch the activity around it from day to day.
- Make snow angels in fresh snow. Decorate the angels with coloured water from spray bottles.
- Build a fort by piling and packing fresh snow.
- Observe snowflakes on a dark cloth through a magnifying glass.