

This factsheet gives you guidance on what activities you might do now you have an outdoor learning space. We look at person-led versus curriculum led learning and how the seasons can give you the inspiration for learning activities.

“Purposeful experiences in the outdoors can be a catalyst for powerful and memorable learning” Institute for Outdoor Learning

If you followed the other outdoor learning factsheets in this series ([Setting up Your Site](#) and [Using Your Site](#)) then you may have a site identified, have worked through access and site considerations, gathered together an essentials kit, completed your risk-benefit assessments and even started using your space having pre-planned your session and reviewed it afterwards. Congratulations – you are well on the way to embedding outdoor learning in your setting! But you may equally be reading this yet to take the first steps to actually using your space for outdoor learning.

You may still be wondering WHY and WHAT! If so, read on!

THE WHY: PERSON-LED or CURRICULUM-LED

As we mentioned in our first outdoor learning factsheet, outdoor learning isn't simply about taking your indoor learning, outdoors. However, many of us no doubt remember fondly the hot summer days when your teacher finally gave in and let you take our work outside in the sunshine. The purpose of any outdoor learning is to work with, and in, the outdoor environment to improve our knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours for both personal and social benefit.

Different settings will use outdoor learning for some or all these reasons. It's important to know yours. As you gain confidence in running outdoor learning sessions, just as in an indoor setting, you will start to sense what the group you are working with needs.

- Is engaging with nature through outdoor learning a way to increase a person's life skills or bolster their self-esteem? In which case your session plans may become far less of a priority and more of a starting point. Your sessions may well be very **person-led, allowing the activity to flow where the learner takes it.**
- You may, however, be in an educational setting for example where, whilst personal development and wellbeing are important, they are not the primary focus– increasing knowledge is. In which case your sessions may be more **curriculum-led and likely more structured.**



THE WHAT

So, with a better understanding of the Why. What's the What? Nature is very giving. And the seasons can be great inspiration for your outdoor learning sessions. Even curriculum-based topics explored outdoors can be tweaked depending on the season. For example:

Autumn



This time of year brings the opportunity, in its simplest form, for an abundance of activities relating to trees and leaves – finding different coloured leaves may lead to an environmental art project or learning how to do [Hapa Zome](#) (leaf or flower bashing!) or be an [inspiration for poetry](#). For other learners that might be the focus for exploring plant biology or [citizen science projects](#) to increase a learner's understanding of biodiversity and how to improve it in their locality.

Winter



The darker nights and changing weather bring the chance to study animal tracks and trails and introduce the concept of nocturnal animals. You [could create and hang bird-feeders](#), study the biology of evergreen trees and the science of icicles and snow or the geology of rocks. And of course, winter is the perfect time to learn about fire lighting and outdoor cooking safely or improve your story-telling skills.

Spring

Spring brings new life: plants begin to emerge from their sleep and crisp, fresh days await. This allows us to understand the cyclical nature of the environment and plant-life, to [spot signs of spring](#) or improve your [tree identification](#) by studying shape, colour and venation.



Summer

Warmer days provide an ideal time to explore the biodiversity around your site. A fun [bug survey](#) with just a white sheet will amaze you with the abundance of fauna in just a small space. For others, this activity might be the basis of further entomology study or identification. Cloud-gazing and enjoying a quiet sit spot to wonder at the world around also beckons. More formal mindfulness isn't always necessary as nature really helps support our wellbeing.

So, when planning your what – take a look outside first. What resources is nature giving you right now? If you plan around your environment, then the activity ideas should be easy to harness.

RESOURCES/LINKS

[Institute for Outdoor Learning](#): The IOL has a wonderful section to support outdoor learning with links to even more activity ideas from organisations such as The Woodland Trust.

[Landscapes for Learning](#): Previously known as Grounds for Learning in Scotland, the organisation has an extensive library of curriculum-led outdoor learning activities which you can filter by curriculum topic or age.

[Creative Star](#): Referenced in previous factsheets, The Creative Star website has a great page of further links to support your outdoor learning.

**For more gardening activity ideas, visit: www.trellisScotland.org.uk/activities
Need help, advice, or further information? Email: info@trellisScotland.org.uk**