

Language and Literacy Outdoors

// Activities & Games

CHILDREN, EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING & SKILLS
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Looking for more learning resources, information & data?



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Context

This booklet highlights the importance of sustainably managing our natural resources, focusing on exploring nature through language, literacy and communication.

Natural Resources Wales' purpose is to pursue the sustainable management of natural resources in all of its work. This means looking after air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil to improve Wales' well-being, and provide a better future for everyone.

Introduction

All the following activities and many more can be adapted for use in woodlands, coastal settings, local parks, school grounds, etc.

The activities have come from many different sources and have been altered and adapted over the years.

All the natural resources required to complete the activities listed are easily collectible from local nature spaces if your setting has none available.



PICK AND CHOOSE from the following activities to explore the environment to further develop a sense of place, encourage physical activity and promote wellbeing.

Please ensure that your activities are sustainably resourced and have minimal impact on the natural environment.

For example:

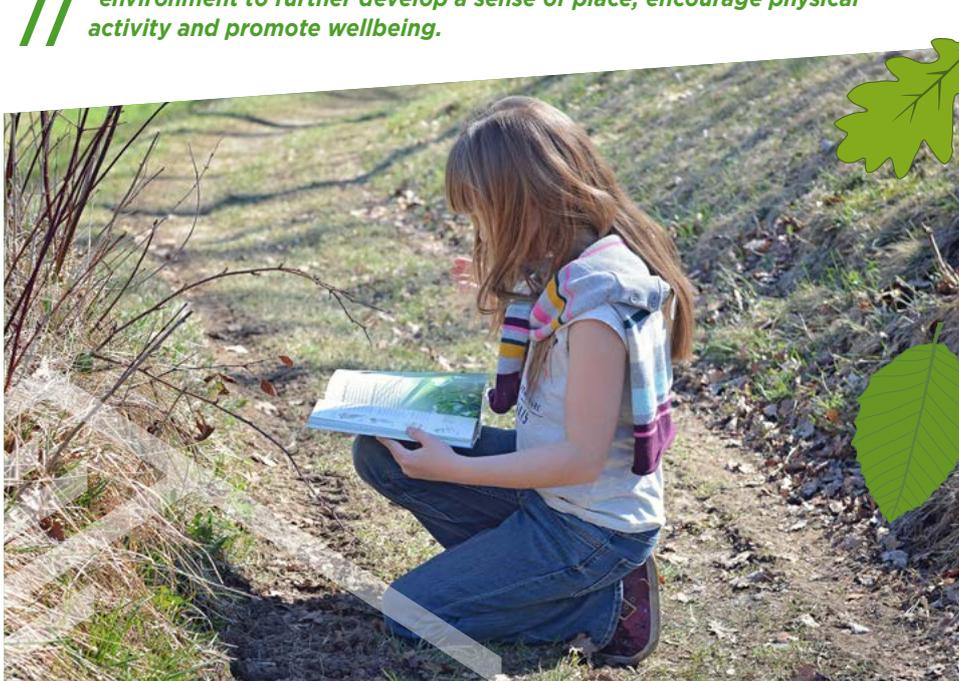
- Be aware of prickly, poisonous plants
- Guard any protected species on site
- Don't over use one area
- Leave nothing but footprints



AIM

To encourage everyone to spend time being in and connecting to nature through first-hand, positive experiences.

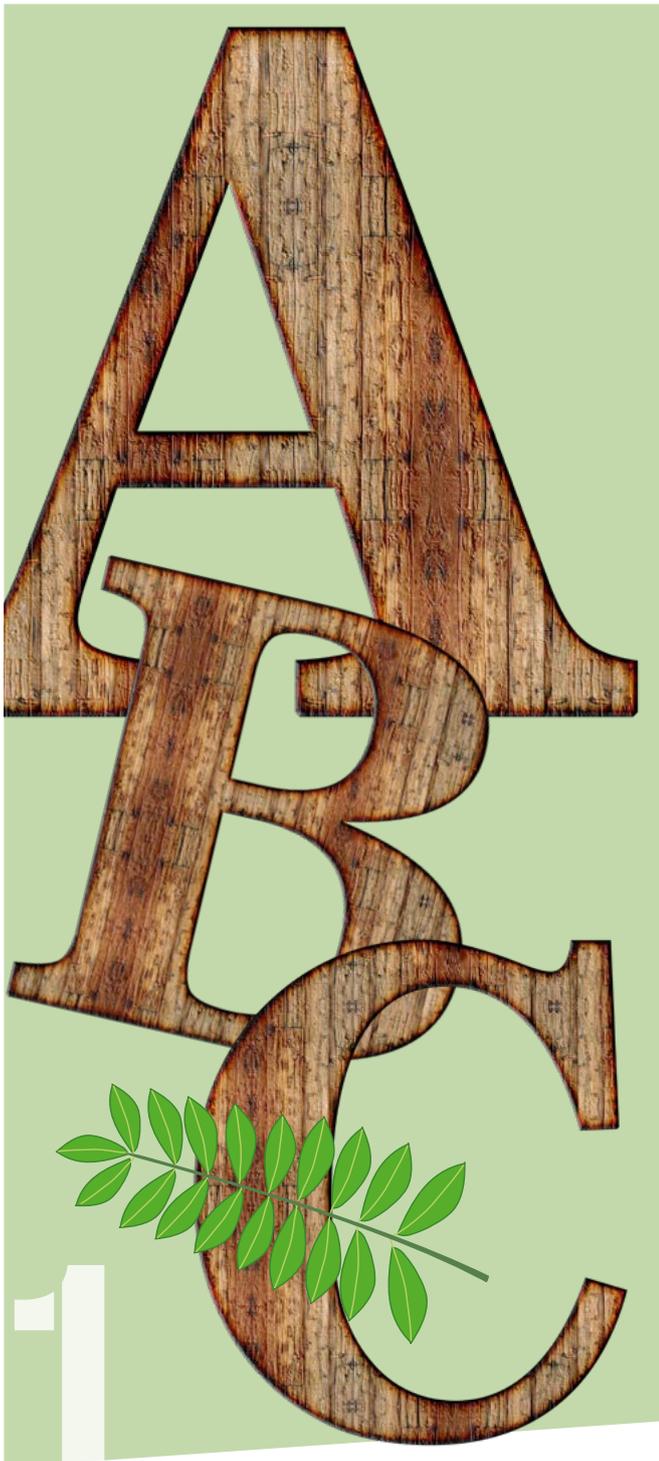
To aid the development of cross curricula skills and knowledge required to meet the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales.





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ACTIVITY 1

SPELLING ACTIVITIES

Overview

These activities encourage letter recognition and word play.

Supporting information & resources:

Sets of printed and laminated Individual alphabet letters

What to do...

LETTER NAMES AND SOUNDS

This activity can be used to practice both letter names and sounds.

It can be run in small groups as a running race or by randomly selecting learners.

- 1 Scatter the letters on the floor of a flat and open space.
- 2 Call out a specific letter in the alphabet.
- 3 The challenge is to run and locate the letter card, touch it or collect it, and return to the start point in the shortest possible time.

MORE ABLE LEARNERS can be tasked to call out a noun, verb, adjective or adverb beginning with that letter.

PHONIC GAME

- 1 Divide your learners into small groups. Then instruct them to line up, one behind the other.
- 2 The first learner of each group runs to find a letter and calls out a word beginning with that letter.
- 3 The learner then returns to the group and stands at the back of the line.
- 4 Repeat until everyone in the group has had a turn. First group to complete wins the challenge.



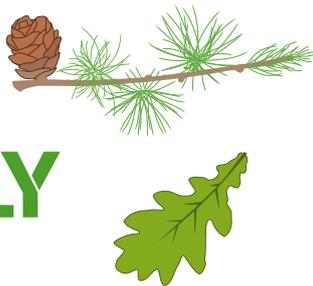
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ACTIVITY 2

TICKLY PRICKLY



Overview

This activity focusses on discovering textures within the natural environment.

Supporting information & resources:

RESOURCE CARDS - *Tickly prickly*

OPTIONAL - *collection containers, e.g. ice cream tubs*

What to do...

- 1 Divide your learners into pairs or small groups.
 - 2 Provide each pair/small group with a set of the resource cards.
 - 3 Ask them to work together to find three natural objects that demonstrate each of the words, e.g. rough and smooth, crunchy and soft.
 - 4 When ready find another pair or group and take turns to work out from the objects, which words are represented by each pair/group.
- // *The aim is to try and guess the other pair or group's two words.*
- 5 This can be continued until all have been identified.

LESS ABLE LEARNERS can be provided with containers, such as old egg boxes with texture words written in the bottom of each section. Collect one example of each.

MORE ABLE LEARNERS can create their own list of textures and adjectives.



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ACTIVITY 3

FEELY BAG/BOX



Overview

This activity encourages learners to explore natural resources through a range of senses.

Supporting information & resources:

Collection bag or box

What to do...

- 1 Collect different natural objects from around your local nature space.
- 2 Place them in the bag or box.
- 3 With closed eyes or using a blindfold, ask one learner at a time to choose an object to pull out.
- 4 They should explore the object through as many senses as possible except sight and describe how the object feels, smells and sounds to try to work out what it is.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY by writing down the descriptive words used to create a poem or a descriptive piece of writing.



ACTIVITY 4

NATURE'S GALLERY



Overview

This activity uses the natural environment as a focus for the use of descriptive and factual language.

Supporting information & resources:

Cardboard frames

What to do...

- 1 Working in pairs or small groups, instruct your learners to take turns to hold up a cardboard frame, focussing on something in the natural environment that they think looks interesting.
- 2 Ask learners to describe in detail what they can see within the frame and why it is interesting.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY by taking photos to inform replication of the picture through a different medium such as a collage or painting.





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ACTIVITY 5

TREASURE TROVE



Overview

This activity combines number and word play.

Supporting information & resources:

Collecting tubs, e.g. old ice cream tubs,
Optional - clipboards, paper, pencils

What to do...

- ① Divide your learners into small groups and provide each group with a collecting tub.
- ② Explain that their task is to collect nature's treasure from around the area.
- ③ Ask them to collect items in descending multiples, e.g. 10 of one particular thing, 9 of another, 8 of another, etc. Place the found items into the collecting tub.
- ④ When collecting is complete, each group can sort their objects into sets and lay them out on the floor, allowing time to observe and use their senses to explore the objects.
- ⑤ Give sufficient time to explore and discuss their finds with each other.
- ⑥ Task the groups with sorting and counting their found objects. Ask them to consider suitable adjectives, then alliteration words that match the nouns.
Each group can collect their words in the same format as the example table below.

Number	Adjectives		Nouns
Five	soft	floating	feathers
Four	crunchy	little	leaves
Three	round	solid	stones
Two	straight	tiny	twigs
One	bumpy	pointy	cone

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY by investigating or creating collective nouns for the objects.

LESS ABLE LEARNERS can use the collected words to create a rhyme, poem, rap or song (the tune of 12 Days of Christmas works well), or practice different parts of grammar, playing with and inventing words.

MORE ABLE LEARNERS could collect fewer treasure items, e.g. start at 5. Or simply collect and sort objects into different tubs, e.g. one for bumpy objects, one for hard objects.





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ACTIVITY 6

MARK MAKING



Overview

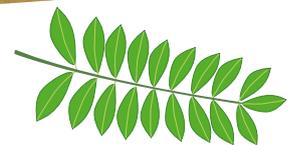
This activity investigates opportunities for mark making in the natural world.

What to do...

- 1 Ask the learners to find a set number of natural items in the locality that they could use to make marks. For example, 6 items - sticks, feathers, shells, stones, plant stems and leaves. Give sufficient time for exploration.
- 2 Using mud, damp sand, etc. as a canvas, ask your learners to mark make with each found item by writing their name, making a shape or tracing another natural object.
- 3 Suggest your learners try out pattern making with the found items by rolling, prodding and poking.

Which item worked best?

Allow time for peers to check out each other's findings.





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ACTIVITY 7

NATURAL CHARACTERS



Overview

This activity allows learners to use natural objects to create a character from a favourite story, a fairy or even themselves that can be used to stimulate story making.

Supporting information & resources:

Selection of crafting items including pipe cleaners, tape, string, felt pens, blutac, scissors, staples and paper plates.

What to do...

Discuss what kind of character is the most suitable for your group to make, dependant on topic or theme. Ask them to use natural materials as well as craft materials to make their character.

Why not consider one of these suggestions?

A STICK PERSON

- 1 Learners can use a forked stick to create the body and legs.
- 2 Pipe cleaners or string can be used to attach a second stick across the body to make the arms.
- 3 Create a face by attaching a blob of clay or a decorated circle of card and simply draw or stick on features.
- 4 Use natural materials such as leaves, grass, etc. for hair and clothes.

A NATURE FAIRY

- 1 Using a large lollipop stick as the body, learners can draw on a face and attach natural objects for limbs and other features, e.g. leaf wings.

Give time to collect natural objects and try out different ways to attach body parts.

EYE SPY WHO?

- 1 With learners divided into small groups, provide each group with a pair of paper plates with black circles drawn on to the middle of the plates. These represent the eyes of a person, animal or mystical creature.
- 2 Placing the eyes on the floor, the groups can work together to use natural materials such as leaves, sand, seashells or twigs to create a body and physical features of the chosen character.

LESS ABLE LEARNERS can be directed to create a story character, think up a name for their character and be given time to take it on a journey or adventure around the area. Ask them to introduce their character, describe what they saw on the way and where they went or how did their character come to live at the site you are using?

MORE ABLE LEARNERS can be divided into small groups and be given time to create a story that includes all their characters. They could then take turns to act out the story with the characters or create a written piece.



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ACTIVITY 8

ANIMAL NAME GAME

Overview

This group activity plays with alliteration.

What to do...

- 1 Ask the group to stand in a circle facing inwards.
- 2 Chose a learner to go first and explain that they need to think of an animal that begins with the same letter as their first name and make an action for that animal.

For example, Name - Susan Seagull
Action - flapping wings.

- 3 The next person in the circle then repeats the first name and associated animal action before adding their own.
- 4 Continue around the circle until the whole group are listed.



ACTIVITY 9

NATURE FIBS



Overview

This activity applies imagination and descriptive language to repurpose natural objects.

What to do...

- 1 Task learners with finding an interesting natural object.
- 2 Ask them to reimagine what the object is and what it is used for. For example, a stick could become the wand of a wizard or the oar of a pirate boat.

Learners take turns to share the new information about each item with the rest of the group.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY by linking each item, one by one, into a group story or write creative stories about individual items.



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ACTIVITY 10

JOURNEY STICKS

Overview

This activity supports the retelling of a journey.



Supporting information & resources:

Wool and string

What to do...

- 1 At the beginning of a nature walk or journey ask your learners to find a stick roughly the same length as their arm to tie items to.
- 2 Provide each learner with lengths of wool or string at the start of your walk which can be used to tie items onto the stick in chronological order.
- 3 As the walk proceeds, they should look for items of interest such as leaves, seeds and flowers, making a mental note of where they have found them.
- 4 On return to base, learners use their journey stick as a memory prompt to describe or write down the story of their journey and what they encountered along the way.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY by exploring the historical use of journey sticks by native people such as **Aborigines, Native Americans, etc.**



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ACTIVITY 11

MINI SAFARI



Overview

This activity encourages exploring a different perspective for story building.

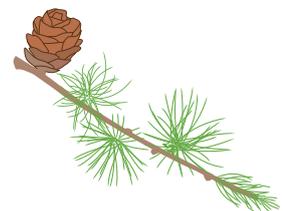
Supporting information & resources:

Arm length pieces of wool/string

Magnifying glasses

What to do...

- 1 Give each learner a piece of wool or string.
- 2 Ask them to lay the wool or string piece along an interesting, natural place.
- 3 Explain to your learners that they are going to imagine that they have been shrunk to microscopic size and the wool/string is a pathway for them to follow.
- 4 Using a magnifying glass, learners can take time to examine the miniscule detail of the landscape all the way along their string.
- 5 Discuss what tiny creatures such as an ant might experience when moving over the landscape. What would a human feel like if they could shrink to ant size? What challenges could they encounter on a journey/adventure at this scale?
- 6 Ask them to draft a story of their mini adventure and share with others.





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ACTIVITY 12

NATURE POETRY



Overview

These activities use nature to inspire a range of different poetry styles.

What to do...

KENNINGS

Create 4 to 6, two-word rhyming couplets that describe what the item/object is or does as clues for others to guess what they refer to.

For example:

**Beetle eater, spikey roller, secret swimmer,
winter sleeper = hedgehog.**

CINQUAIN

Follow a simple formula to create a short poem.

Line ① one-word noun for the object of choice.

Line ② two adjectives that describe the object.

Line ③ three verbs that describe what the object does.

Line ④ a sentence about the object, e.g. how it makes you feel.

Line ⑤ another one-word noun for the object.

For example:

**Tree,
Strong and tall,
Bending, shading, living,
Peacefully providing a happy home for many, Habitat.**

HAIKU

Haiku is a very short Japanese poem with seventeen syllables and three verses, usually in a pattern of 5, 7 and 5.

This can be simplified to suit.

For example:

Blue pond = 2 syllables

Toad leaps in = 3 syllables

Waters splash = 3 syllables

ACROSTIC POEM

Write a suitable nature word down the side of a piece of paper. Use the corresponding letter as a prompt for words related to the subject.

For example:

A mazing

C up

O f

R ich

N ourishment



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ACTIVITY 13

WORD PLAY GAMES

Overview

These activities develop vocabulary through observation.

What to do...

I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE

Play in the traditional way in any nature space.

I HEAR WITH MY LITTLE EAR

Played like 'I spy' but uses homophones – a word that sounds like another word but has a different spelling and meaning.

For example:

I hear with my little ear something that sounds like 'me' = sea, 'good' = wood.

3X3X3

- ① Choose a natural resource/object as a focus.
- ② Write a list of 3 words to describe the object.
- ③ Make another 3-word list, then another.

Name of natural resource: Sea

List 1	List 2	List 3
Wet	Soft	Loud
Wild	Smooth	Roaring
Waving	Silky	Salty

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY by making a higher number of lists. Use the collected words to create a poem or story about the focus item.



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ACTIVITY 14

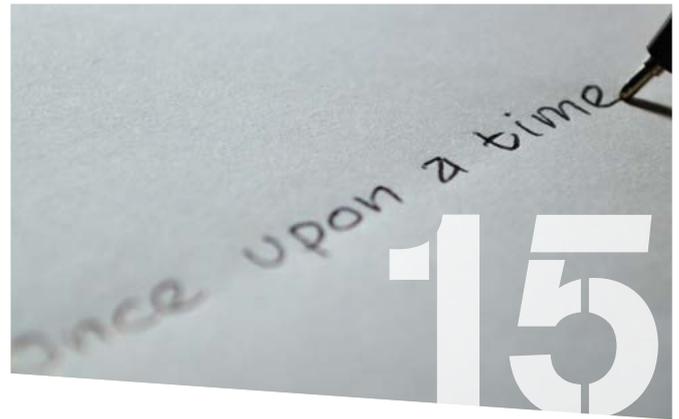
INSTRUCTIONAL WRITING

Overview

Many outdoor learning activities offer great opportunities to develop instructional writing skills working individually, in pairs or in small groups.

What to do...

- ① Build a shelter, then develop a step by step guide.
- ② Make a trail for others to follow and write detailed instructions.
- ③ Create a very specific recipe for a smelly potion or Nature's Menu.
- ④ Keep a Nature Journal.



ACTIVITY 15

STORY TRAILS



Overview

This activity focuses on retelling favourite stories along a nature trail.

Supporting information & resources:

VISUAL AIDS - such as story cards, clues, story characters or story props

String

What to do...

- ① Choose a suitable story for your topic or theme.
- ② Tie or place the visual aids, clues, etc. at key points along the chosen route.
- ③ Invite your group to follow the trail and retell the story at each marker point.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITY by linking other activities to the story at each point. For example, make a character representation, build a home for one of the characters or create a 'dinner menu'.

Sign post the route using sticks or chalk arrows.



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ACTIVITY 16

NATURE'S MENU



Overview

This activity offers opportunity for using descriptive language linked to fictional or non-fictional characters.

Supporting information & resources:

OPTIONAL - paper plates

What to do...

- 1 Work in pairs or very small groups.
- 2 Discuss what a 3-course meal (or a breakfast, lunch and dinner) for a specific character or animal would consist of.

For example: what kind of food and drink would a giant, pixie or a troll eat?

- 3 Ask your learners to gather natural materials to prepare their 3-course meal. Use the paper plates to serve the meal or clear a suitable space on the ground. Use the paper plates as a canvas on which to create the menu or just clear a suitably sized area on the ground.
- 3 Write down the recipes and menu plans.

EXTEND THE ACTIVITIES by putting all the recipes and menus together to create a group 'cook book'. Can the groups replicate each other's menus?

ALTERNATIVELY - deliver similar outcomes by explaining that the animal residents of... insert the name of your local nature space... have all clubbed together to buy a Friday night takeaway.

Using natural materials your group needs to create:

- 1 Owl wants a 'mouse pizza'. Owl has specified he only wants cheese on half his pizza and he would like the toppings to be symmetrical.
- 2 Rabbit wants 'leaf kebabs'. Rabbit has specified that she would like at least five helpings of leaf on each kebab but no more than 10 - she's watching her weight.
- 3 Hedgehog has requested a 'chef's special'.

Set the table in readiness because these animals are hungry!





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ACTIVITY 17

NATURE'S CAMERA



Overview

This activity provides opportunity for using descriptive language to describe what is observed in real time.

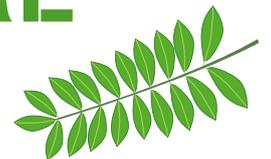
What to do...

- 1 Divide the group into pairs, with 1 acting as the 'camera' and 1 as the learner 'camera operator'.
- 2 Ask the 'operator' to carefully move the 'camera' to an interesting area of choice.
- 3 The 'camera' must keep their eyes shut until the 'operator' sees something they want to photograph.
- 4 The 'operator' then presses the ear/arm/shoulder of the 'camera' for 3-5 seconds – for which time the camera opens his or her eyes.
- 5 The 'camera' then closes their eyes and recalls the picture in as much descriptive language as possible.



ACTIVITY 18

UNNATURE TRAIL



Overview

This activity provides opportunity for discussion, personal stand points and description of materials.

Supporting information & resources:

String, pegs, safety gloves and/or litter pickers

What to do...

- 1 Tie the string between two posts or trees to make a 'washing line'.
- 2 Ask the learners to look for things that don't belong naturally in the area, being careful not to touch anything sharp or dangerous.
- 3 As objects are collected tie or peg them onto the washing line.
- 4 Examine what you have found and discuss how the items may have got there. What are they made of and what kind of impact could they have if left? Could an animal be hurt by it?
- 5 Discuss how the group feel about finding non-natural things in a natural space.