



Environmental Games & Activities

These activities can be adapted for a range of ages and situations and to fulfil different learning intentions. For some games you may like to give a small bag to each child [or pair of children] with some of the resources inside. This can add to the experience and also means you do not have to carry everything around with you!

Mirror walk

This is a good introduction to a wood - it is magical and intrigues even the disillusioned 15 year olds! The walk can be used to: introduce the different layers of a wood; introduce new language such as canopy; talk about the different animals that live in the canopy, their food and habitats; the function of the leaves.

Choose a path with no exposed roots and no low overhanging branches. Children walk very slowly one behind the other, a step between the next person, you lead, mirror above their nose, under their eyes. Get them to imagine they are one of the animals and they have to look for somewhere to live and something to eat.

Could also be used with the mirrors upside down to explore the ground layer, imagining they are minibeasts/ woodland mammals.

Magic Listening jewels

To encourage good listening skills and awareness of their surroundings. Use coloured glass pebbles. Tell the children that when they are holding their jewel they need to close their eyes and they will magically be able to hear all kinds of sounds better. Do this for approx 1 minute and then get the children to tell you what they can hear.

Touch/ feely cards

This is a senses related and descriptive activity. Make cards with different textured objects attached. Give each child or pair a card and ask them to think of a word that describes their texture. Then ask them to find an object in their surroundings that is similar to the texture on their card. They don't need to pick things, but can tell you what they find. You can then ask them to show their found item to another child and see if they can think of a word to describe the texture, it may be the same or a different word.

Memory game

This can be played in many different ways and adapted for the particular point you want to teach. Show the children approx. 6 natural objects, give them a couple of minutes to memorise them and then ask them to go and look for the objects/ or, if played indoors to list the objects. Check to see if they have found them all. You may be teaching about different leaf shapes or seeds. You could choose objects that all relate to each other in some way [eg. are all a food source] and this can develop into a discussion.

Woodland Words

Give each child a simple adjective. Get them to find a part of the wood that matches the word. The children keep changing the words.

Colour boxes or colour pallets

This is a senses related activity to raise awareness of their surroundings, and to introduce nature's use of colour for camouflage and attraction. Use egg boxes with each compartment painted a different colour, or colour selection pallets made from paint swatches. Ask the children, maybe in pairs, to look for objects in their surroundings that match the colours. You can make this harder by choosing lots of different shades of one colour, eg green. They can either collect these in their boxes or just show you what they've found. The children don't need to pick things, but need to match the colour as closely as possible. Encourage them to describe the colour too. Follow with a discussion on the importance of a variety of colours within a habitat for the camouflage and attraction of animals.

Camouflage trails, corks

Set up a short trail with both natural and unnatural coloured manufactured objects. Make sure the children stay on the path. Which ones do they notice first. This can be done with coloured corks hidden along the path. Discuss camouflage and also the way bright colours help flowers attract insects, bright colours attract a mate.

Rainbow cards

Having done the last activity the children will be aware of how many colours there are around them. Can they now find enough different colours to make a rainbow on their sticky card (double sided tape on card). Peel off the tape and simply stick tiny pieces to the card. They could create a picture instead, or, if going for a walk they could create a picture reminder of where they've been by choosing one object from each area as they go.

Food cards

Make up cards that have a picture of something a bird eats. The children hunt around to see if they can find the animal or plant on their card. You can then discuss whether the area is a good habitat for a bird. This could be done with any animal.

Collecting pots

Children love to collect things. This can be linked to virtually any theme. They could collect so many tiny objects or things of all one colour or as many leaf shapes/seed cases as they can find etc. Remember to stress not to pick things unless they are dead or there are a lot of them.

Bark / stone rubbings

To explore textures and variations from tree to tree/ stone to stone. Take rubbings of the objects using crayons. Could be used to make collages/ art projects.

Mini Wild Parks

Use an area where there are plenty of mosses, fallen leaves etc. The children can mark the boundaries of their parks with string or leaf stalks. Within, create a miniature park area from a minibeasts point of view. They can import only natural objects. Using a magnifying glass they can give others a tour of their park. This helps them to explore their surroundings on a different scale; to become aware that grasses and mosses are individual plants.

Squirrels

This is an activity to get children thinking about seed germination and in particular about the part animals play in the process. Give the children a peanut or small natural object. These are nuts that the squirrel wants to store for the winter. The children then find a place to hide their 'nut'. Later they have to find them again. Talk about how easy it is to lose the seeds.

Map sticks

Apparently used by Native American Indians to find their way home, this simple idea is used to collect memory aids on a stick. Tie elastic bands or string around a stick so that the children can tuck objects onto their stick. Can be used on a walk then taken back to the classroom to help them remember where they've been, or to help them remember the key points of a story.

Bat and Moth

This game demonstrates how a bat uses a signal echoing back off its prey to home in on moths (bat food). The moths can sense the bat's presence and take evasive action.

Arrange children in a circle at least 3 metres across.

Two children are blindfolded, disorientated, and stood in different parts of circle - one the moth and one the bat.

The bat has to capture the moth by listening for the echo of its call, the moth must avoid being eaten.

The bat calls out 'BAT' to which the moth must respond immediately 'MOTH'.

Both can then move inside the circle, calling and replying.

Other members of the circle, link hands to prevent bat and moth leaving.

Once caught, swap roles.

If too easy, make the circle bigger and have more than one moth at a time.

Can also be used to demonstrate other predator/ prey relationships.

Tree Shelters

This is a game to show how birds rely on trees for shelter and food and how birds flock. It's also a prey/ predator game.

You'll need 3/4 bean bags to represent birds. The group spread out to represent trees (trees don't move their feet!). One or two people represent a bird of prey; they can move around the wood. The 'birds' are thrown from tree to tree and the birds of prey try to intercept them.

After some time, start removing the trees one by one to show how birds need cover to survive.

What animal am I?

To identify animals by questioning

Pin a picture or name of an animal on the back of one of the children. S/he asks the others questions to discover his own identity. The other children can only answer Yes, No or Maybe.

Or you tell children facts about an animal: its habits, its food, its predators, its shelter etc, and the children must try to work out what animal it is.

Noah's Ark

To recognise animal movement and behaviour

Make a list of animals half as long as there are players. Write the name of each animal on two small cards (there should then be enough cards for each child to have one each, if an odd number, there should be three of one animal). Shuffle the cards and hand out. Each child becomes the animal on their card, keeping their identity secret. They move around the space, acting out the sounds, shapes and movement of their animal, trying to find their mate to go into the Ark with.

Animal parts

To recognise animal movement and behaviour

Children should be in groups of 4-5. Select an animal (this could be after collecting or observing different creatures). As a group, they have to use their bodies to make a model of that animal. The other teams have to guess their identity on the basis of movement and behaviour they act out. No noise is allowed.