

## Magic Wands

A truly magical activity that fires up the imagination and allows children to tap into their creative sides while exploring the wonderful natural world



**Kit:** coloured wool (ideally in varying colours)

1. Everyone heads off to find the perfect stick for their wand. It could have fallen from a tree that has special powers in folklore such as the oak, symbolising courage and wisdom. Or just one they like – nobbles and gnarly knots add great character! Also search for natural decorations to adorn the wands, like feathers, leaves and seeds.
2. Makers can now attach their chosen decorative objects to the stick using coloured wool. Tie them on with a double overhand knot. Winding the wool round the stick can add another unique touch.
3. Once the wands are complete, cast some spells and let the magic begin!

## Story Stones

Create a magical storytelling circle and let personalized stones be the guide – great for boosting confidence and developing the creative imagination



**Kit:** drawstring bag • smooth, round, palm-sized pebbles • colouring pens

1. Ask everyone to sit in a circle, then go round with a bag full of pebbles and ask each child to take one. Let them notice its weight, shape, texture and colour.
2. Each child now draws or writes something on their stone – an animal, pattern, word: whatever they wish. Then put the stones back in the bag and mix them up.
3. Ask a child to pull out a stone and use it as inspiration to start a story, placing the stone on the ground when they have finished speaking. As each child picks out a stone, they continue the story, until all the stones are laid out on the floor.

## Nature's Headdresses

Nature provides all the materials you need for these wonderful headdresses, an activity that never fails to unfold into many performances!



**Kit:** long strips of sturdy plain and coloured card, 10cm (4in) wide • scissors • double-sided tape • stapler

1. Choose a length of card each. Measure to make sure it fits around your head with a little overlap.
2. Stick a length of double-sided tape lengthways along the centre of the card. When ready to stick items on, peel back the protective strip.
3. The group now goes off to search the forest floor to find natural decorations for their headdresses, sticking on flowers, leaves, seedheads and other chosen items as they go.
4. As each headdress is completed, the ends can be fastened together using a stapler.
5. Now wear your headdress with pride!

## Clay Art

Get creative with earth's clay, take a memory of the forest home with you

**Kit:** clay – enough for everyone to have a rectangle piece approx 15 x 12cm (6 x 5in) and 2-3cm (1in) thick • pieces of cardboard of equivalent size • paper • pencils • toothpicks

1. Forage for decorations, such as fallen petals or pebbles, leaves and feathers from the forest floor.
2. Press out the clay between your hands to make a rectangle the size of your piece of cardboard, keeping it roughly 2-3cm (1in) thick. Leave the clay on top of the cardboard and put to one side.
3. Draw an outline of an animal or plant on a piece of paper, remembering not to make it larger than your clay. Lay the paper on the clay and press down to secure.
4. Use the toothpick to make lots of small holes through the paper, along the outline of your drawing, to make an exact copy on the clay.
5. Remove the paper and add your decorations by pressing them carefully into the clay.
6. Leave to dry in the sun. Once dry, the cardboard can be removed.

## Nature Watch

**Connect deeply with nature, stilling the mind and silently observing everything around you**

1. Take a quiet stroll to your chosen natural space. Set the scene by explaining how Native American hunters would use the following technique to learn everything they could about the world around them.
2. Allow players to find their spot, letting their intuition guide them to their chosen place. Once there, ask them to sit as motionless as they can. If it helps, they can shut their eyes to begin with.
3. When they are ready, they can open their eyes and remain perfectly still to observe the scene around them – the birds that pass by, the sound of buzzing insects, the smell of the trees, the leaves that sway in the breeze. At the same time, they can notice how they themselves feel.
4. Set a loose timeframe of around 5-7 minutes (younger ones may want to try a shorter period), and when the time has come to move back into the group, invite everyone to share their experience.

## Journey Stick

**Journey sticks act as a physical reminder of an experience in nature and are a way to remember all the places and thoughts we had along the way.**



**Kit: lengths of string/wool or rubber bands**

1. Have everyone find a stick and wrap lengths of string/wool (or, for younger children, lots of rubber bands) around it.
2. Tell them that they are now going on a walk to collect natural objects, anything that attracts them on their journey, to become a part of their stick. These objects can represent memories, things they like, or feelings/thoughts.
3. Put the first thing found at the top of the stick to represent the beginning, and the last thing found near the bottom to help with retelling the story.
4. Have each child tell the others the story of their journey, using the objects as prompts.

## Scavenger Hunt

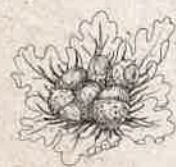
**This is a fun, guided way of focusing children's natural curiosity and urge to explore, deepening their bond with the local landscape**

**Kit: scavenger clue card for each child/team • pencils**

1. Before you play, create a scavenger clue card with 9-16 common outdoor objects (avoiding anything rare or dangerous, obviously!). The clues could be just pictures, just words, or both, and can also include experiences, like hearing a specific sound or feeling the wind on your face.
2. Assemble the hunters and make sure everyone understands the clues, and that they should cross them off their cards as they find them.
3. Off they go! Get them to put crosses through the clues as they find them. Join in as a helper to provide encouragement and hints, but always let the kids take the initiative.
4. When everyone is finished, have them talk about what they did or didn't find. What was the hardest thing to find? What was each child's favourite? Was there anything they couldn't track down, and why?

## Acorn Hide-and-Seek

**This physically active game is a great way to explore and connect with nature, as children take on the role of the squirrel, gathering and hiding nuts for the winter**



**Kit: a small bag/container for each child**

1. Ask the children to imagine themselves as squirrels in autumn, gathering acorns and hiding them so that they can dig them up to eat in the winter months.
2. The 'squirrels' should find an oak tree and collect 5-10 acorns from the forest floor beneath it.
3. Have them find a good place to hide them (making sure no one else sees!). Good spots could be under a rock, or near a fallen log – they can use these details to remember where they hid them, just like squirrels who can remember months later.
4. After a walk around the surrounding area, it's time to see if the squirrels can find their acorns!

## Mandala

An imaginative way to use the woods and the treasures it contains as a blank canvas for unique pieces of personal and shared art



**Kit:** long sticks (if fallen ones are not available)

1. Explain to the group that they will be making a mandala with sticks on the ground in the shape of an old-fashioned cartwheel. They will then decorate each section with found natural objects.
2. Once the mandala shape has been created using sticks, let the children head off to find items for their own artwork in a section of the mandala. This might be leaves, feathers, mud or stones.
3. Items collected, they can decorate their section of the mandala on the ground. Their artwork can represent whatever they want it to, whether that's a story, a memory, a feeling, or something they have seen - anything at all they would like to make and perhaps show the rest of the group.

## Photographic Memory

Develop focus and memory skills with this interactive nature scavenger hunt

**Kit:** 2 cloths, big enough to display/cover 10 objects

1. Secretly gather 5-10 common natural objects from the area, such as a rock, a pine cone, a stick, a nutshell - nothing uprooted or picked.
2. Arrange the objects on one of the cloths and then use the other cloth to cover them.
3. Ask the players to imagine they are a camera. When you remove the cloth, they are going to focus on the objects for 30 seconds, then shut their eyes tight and take a mental picture of all the things they have seen.
4. The players now head off to find an example of each of the objects they 'photographed' in their mind.
5. After 10-20 minutes of searching, call the players back so that they can lay all the things they've found in front of the covered objects.
6. Take out one object at a time from under the cloth, hold it out and ask if anyone has found anything similar. Talk about each item.

## Hungry Birds

Open up a hunting bird's-eye view of the world with this energetic game

**Kit:** 12cm (5in) lengths of wool in lots of different colours, a mixture of bright colours and those that blend in with the surrounding area

1. Before the game starts, hide the 'worms' (strands of coloured wool) around your area - remembering where you placed them. Divide the children into two teams.
2. Collect two sticks for each team, and tie each different coloured wool strand onto one stick. These will be used as a guide, and they tie any 'worms' they find onto the other stick.
3. Give each team their guide stick (showing the colours of wool they should be looking for).
4. Tell the players that they are young birds and must work together to hunt for food. Set a time limit and a boundary, and then off they go!
5. When the time is up, call all the birds back to count up their worms - whichever team has collected the most, wins!

## Predators Track Prey

A thrilling take on traditional hide-and-seek, requiring teamwork and communication

1. Explain to the group that a predator is an animal that hunts and eats other animals, and the prey is the animal that is eaten. Then divide the group into two teams: the predators and their prey.
2. Have everyone gather up lots of sticks. These will form the tracking arrows that lead the predators to the prey's hiding place.
3. While the predators wait, the prey have 15 minutes to decide on their hiding place and lay down the tracking arrows to mark the way, stopping about 15m (50ft) from the prey. An X made of sticks should be left to mark this spot.
4. Once the time is up, the predators can start to track their prey, following the arrows. When they find the X, they can start the search for their 'food' as a group, knowing that their prey are close by.
5. If the prey are found, the predators have won! If the prey can avoid being seen, and jump out together as the predators pass, shouting 'STOP!', then the prey win!

## Zip Zap Boing

A great ice-breaker that builds concentration, memory and quick reflexes

1. In this game, everyone stands in a circle, throwing an imaginary ball from person to person, along with a gesture and a word:
  - You say '**Zip**' when you pass the ball to someone next to you, on your left or right, **holding your hands out as if passing a ball**. The receiver can then respond with either a Zip, Zap or Boing.
  - You say '**Zap**' when you pass across the circle, maintaining eye contact with the intended receiver as you '**throw**' them the ball. The receiver can then respond with either a Zip, Zap or Boing.
  - You say '**Boing**' if you don't wish to receive the ball, **jumping up with your hands in the air** facing the person who aimed at you. Now it's their turn again to Zip or Zap someone else!
2. Keep the game moving quickly, and if someone hesitates for too long or uses a word and action that don't match, they are out for that round. The game carries on until there are only three players remaining or until 10 minutes has elapsed.

## Animal Tag

A great game for running off energy while learning about the local wildlife

Kit: 6 small cones

1. Mark out a large rectangular playing area using the cones and explain that at each end of the rectangle there is a home base.
2. All the players except for one (the tagger) line up, shoulder to shoulder, at one end of the pitch. Everyone thinks of an animal, but mustn't tell anyone what it is.
3. The tagger stands in the middle of the pitch and asks yes/no questions to help them identify which animals the other players have chosen - 'Does it live in the sea?', 'Does it have fur?', 'Is it a reptile?' etc.
4. If a player can answer 'yes' to any of the questions, they must run from one side of the pitch to the other, at which point the tagger can try to catch them.
5. Those players who are caught join the tagger's team, and the game continues until all the animals have been caught.

## Team Games

### Bat and Moth

Fine-tune the senses and build trust among a group in this active, tactical game based on the amazing phenomenon of echolocation



Kit: cotton scarf or other blindfold

1. Choose one player to be the bat and another to be the moth. Everyone else is a tree. All the trees hold hands and make a large circle around moth and the bat. The bat should now be blindfolded.
2. To try to find the moth, the bat claps their hands, like sending out a sound wave, at which point the moth must clap back. This is echolocation! The bat now knows where the moth is and is ready to catch its prey, so the moth must move to avoid capture. The bat can clap again to keep track of the moth.
3. If the bat grabs one of the trees as it tries to find the moth, the tree calls out 'TREE!'. The hunt continues until the moth has been caught! The bat, moth and trees can now all switch places.