

Removing the barriers to outdoor play



Outdoor play provides fantastic opportunities for exciting open ended learning, but we understand that it's not always easy. Here's some advice on how to tackle common barriers to exploring the great outdoors.

Limited space

If your space is only small, make sure it's well planned and invest in storage that means you don't have all your equipment out at once. Organise activities that play to the strengths of your environment – grass and woodland areas are great for minibeast hunts and paved areas are great for mark making.

Unpredictable weather

Be prepared! Ask parents to bring warm clothes in winter and hats and sun cream in summer. If necessary, you can limit the time spent outside – even short bursts of fresh air can really

benefit children. When it's cold plan activities with lots of movement, and in hot weather incorporate water and ice into your outdoor play.

Safety concerns

It's hugely important to keep children in your care safe; however this does not mean eliminating all risks. When managed properly, small risks help children to learn. Good planning and training can ensure safety across a huge range of outdoor activities.

Making a mess

Messy play is fantastic for sensory exploration. To minimise the burden of the big clear up, get the children involved and turn it into a fun activity which can also help a child's learning and development. Invest in protective clothing to reduce the mess while still enabling children to get stuck in to all activities.

Costly resources

Purchasing resources for both indoor and outdoor areas can make budgets feel stretched. Don't overcomplicate the outdoor space – some of the best activities involve only natural materials and a little imagination.

Parental concerns

Communication is key – explain outdoor activities clearly and highlight the benefits. If you have facilities to share photos with parents, ensure that you send some of the children enjoying outdoor spaces.

Staff motivation

Involve staff in planning– the more imaginative the better! If necessary, book training courses to enthuse staff about outdoor learning. Provide resources that make it as easy as possible for staff to manage outdoor environment themselves.