



**It's time
for the
outdoors!**

FOREWORD



This Outdoor Learning Activity Journal is designed to encourage early childhood educators to use the outdoors as a learning space.

The ideas incorporate some useful concepts from the resource ‘Outdoor Learning-A National Guide for Early Childhood Educators’ which will be of interest to educators who want to use the outdoors in their teaching.

The activity ideas are designed to trigger thinking, conversation and reflection which we hope will contribute to the development of quality teaching. So, do question, discuss, rationalise and address your responses together as a team.

We encourage this journal to be used as part of teacher training activities during preschool centre meetings or centre-based professional development workshops.



Let’s work together to embrace the outdoors as part of everyday learning in our preschools!



Take the BREAD Test!

When planning an outdoor activity, it would be helpful to find out the potential benefits and risks of the space you intend to use.

Bread is an approach you can use to conduct a Benefit-Risk Assessment. B-R-E-A-D stands for:

Benefits

Risks

Evaluation

Action

Decision

You can read more about B-R-E-A-D on page 29 of the *Outdoor Learning: A National Guide for Early Childhood Educators*

Before you head outside, have a go and try this simple assessment. Circle out the areas you think are outdoor 'Risks' in red and 'Benefits' in blue. Have a conversation with your fellow educators about your choices.



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A Badge for your Pledge!

“ I pledge to be bold, to be brave, in every learning adventure we crave. Before we dive into the realm of 'no,' let's pause and see the benefits glow.

I promise to seek the joy in every task, to embrace the outdoors, to boldly unmask. The wonders that lie beyond the gate, for in every risk, there's a chance to create.

So let's flip the script, let's change our view, from 'what could go wrong?' to 'what could we do!' With hearts full of courage and minds set alight, we'll chase the benefits, and risks take flight.

Together we'll laugh, we'll learn, we'll explore, with safety in mind, and so much more. So raise your hand and join the quest, to put benefits first, we'll give it our best! ”

Award yourself a badge for taking the pledge and ensuring a safe environment for the children!



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Take a PEEP!

Take a look at this typical playground that you might see in your neighbourhood. Even though you might visit it often, use PEEP to remain vigilant of potential hazards.

Did you know that when planning and implementing outdoor activities, there are safety considerations to bear in mind?

Identify issues, concerns, hazards and mitigating measures, by using the PEEP model, which stands for:

People
Environment
Equipment
Process

You can read more about P-E-E-P on page 25 of the *Outdoor Learning: A National Guide for Early Childhood Educators*



The goal is not to eliminate all risks from children's lives, but to manage them with a perspective that considers the spectrum of hazards.



Spot the potential risks within the picture.

Compare your list with the educators in your teaching team.



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The Quick Outdoor Checklist

Read through the list. Which of the statements would you associate with the following:



People

Environment

Equipment

Process



Assign roles and responsibilities for adequate adult supervision.

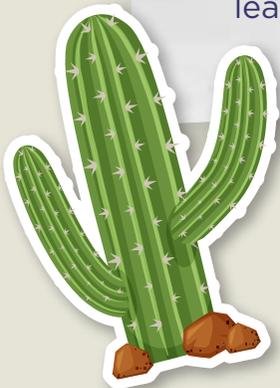
Be mindful of current weather conditions and prepare for potential changes.

Ensure the outdoor area is clear of hazards and safe for children.

Bring along essential safety items and check equipment condition beforehand.

Foster a nurturing environment by setting clear guidelines for behavior.

Plan engaging activities aligned with educational objectives and bring materials to enhance learning experiences.



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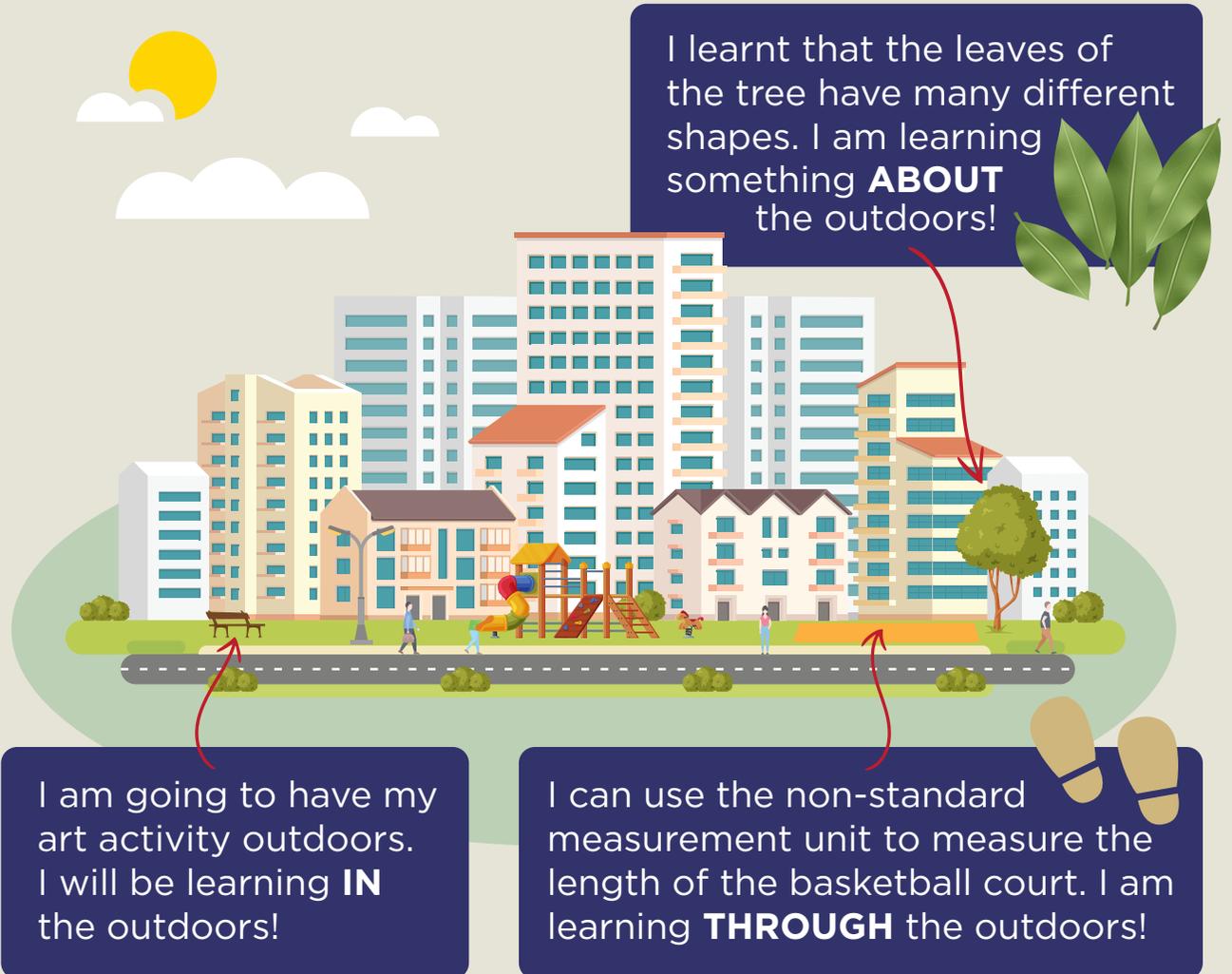
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Learning In, About and Through the Outdoors

Did you know that we don't just learn in the outdoors? Our lessons and activities can also provide us the opportunity to learn 'about' and 'through' the outdoors!

The affordances of the outdoors offer children many learning opportunities. You might engage the children in all three aspects of outdoor learning without realising it.

Refer to page 9 of the *Outdoor Learning: A National Guide for Early Childhood Educators* to discover more about learning 'in, about and through the outdoors'



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Outdoors Galore!

When we use the outdoors as our classroom, it means children are learning **IN** the outdoors!

When children learn and find out more about the outdoor environment, it means they are learning **ABOUT** the outdoors.

When children learn something interesting related to the features of the outdoors, they can say we are learning **THROUGH** the outdoors!

Which of the following activities would be considered learning in, about and through the outdoors? See which fits. Have a chat with your peers! Remember it may not be so clear cut!

Sort out the toy cars under a tree

Identify things that make sounds in your neighbourhood walk

Look for different shapes in the outdoor environment

IN

THROUGH

ABOUT



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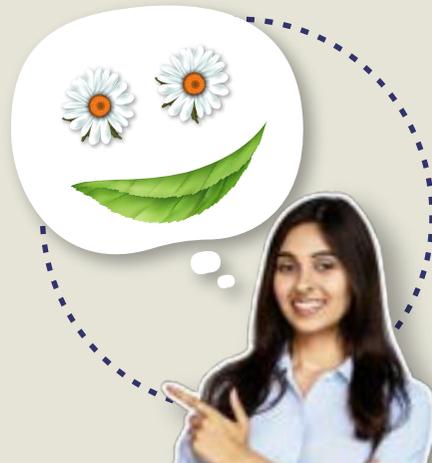


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Develop an OUTitude!

What do you need to have when you go outdoors?
 Develop your **O-U-T-itude!**
 Keep an **OPEN MIND**, learn to **UNDERSTAND** children's needs and always make an effort to **TRY**.



Open mind!

Think of possibilities, not risks and make the most of what the outdoor environment offers you!



Understand!

Understand the needs of the child?
 Go with what interests them rather than what you want to do!



Try!

Try new ways of interacting with the outdoor environment. Instead of avoiding an activity in fear of any risks, try taking small steps instead!

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Busy Little Hands

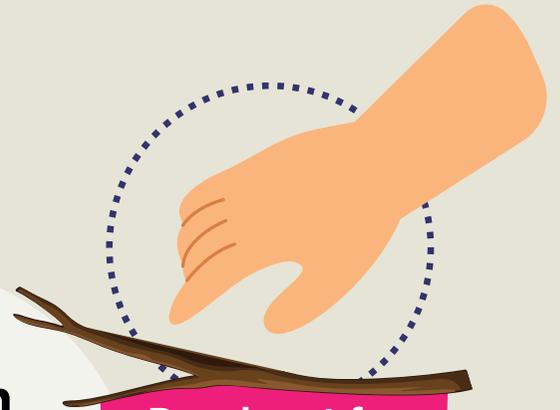
Enable infants and toddlers to touch and feel objects in the outdoor environment.

Infants and toddlers can benefit much from being outdoors. Identify and list the items that they can safely touch and feel!

Make a list of items that will be safe for infants and toddlers to explore when they go outdoors



Grab & grip



Reach out for



Transfer from one hand to another

Paste on loose parts that an infant can play with



Put in and out of a box

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Getting Outdoors Ready!

Fill this bag with items donated by parents for outdoor use.

Create your own outdoor trolley bag to give you endless ideas for outdoor activities! It is easy to bring around and the children can even help you with it!

A clever idea would be to engage parents to donate items to support outdoor learning. These are a few ideas. What else can you come up with?

List of items for outdoor learning



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The Great Outdoors

PAUSE & REFLECT:

How would engaging infants and toddlers in the outdoors support their development?

Think of simple tweaks to your outdoor activities to better engage infants and toddlers in the outdoors.

MON

When we go for our walk, they can...

TUE

When we lay on the grass, they can...

WED

When they sit and rest outside, they can...

THU

When they ride in the buggy, they can...

FRI

When it rains, they can...



Cognitive



Social & Emotional



Communication & Language



Physical

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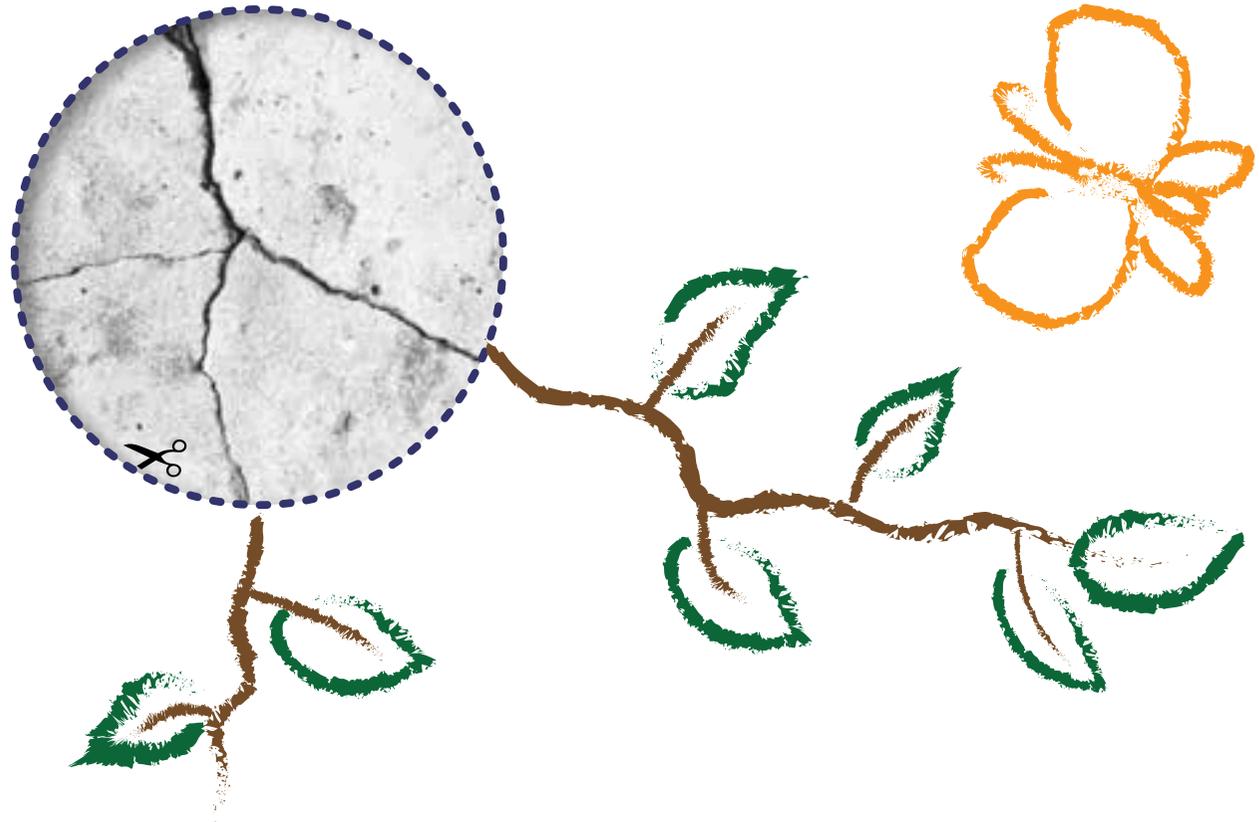


Observe and Draw

The outdoors offers many opportunities for learning and development. More importantly, it is also an opportunity to observe, appreciate and imagine. How can you adapt this for your class?

Cut the circle out to create a hole. Place the paper over any surface (e.g. the floor, grass or wall).

Notice details in the hole and extend the picture by drawing in the space around the hole.



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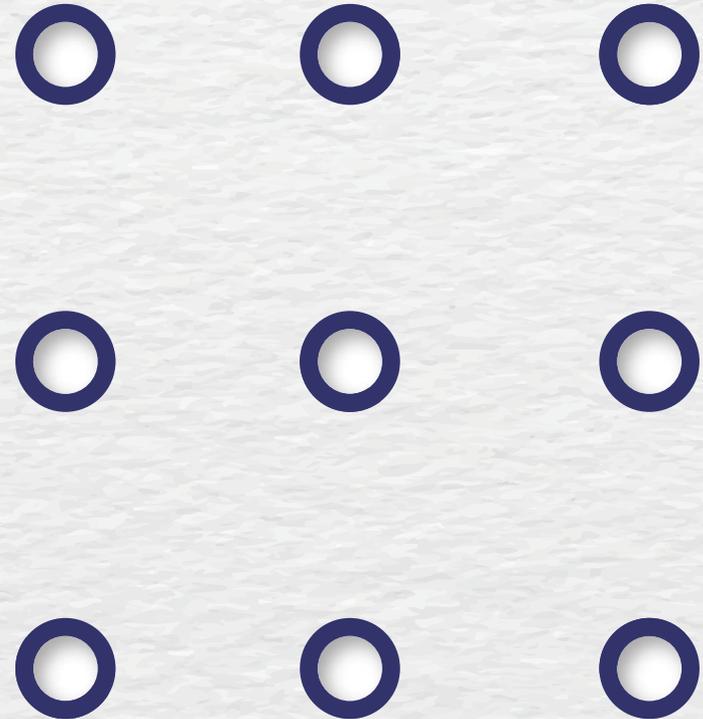
Special Nature Card

Poke holes in the circles. Weave a string of thin leaves or twig across the holes to create a weaving frame. Beautify with other nature items within it.



Take time to look around and appreciate the wonders of nature. Express your gratitude and appreciation to your friends with nature items.

This card is specially created for:



Note: If you intend to print this out the paper used should be of relative thickness, e.g. cardboard or thick art block.

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Nature Detectives



This is a fun scavenger hunt activity that will help you to be more aware of the environment around your preschool. You can find the items first and collect them or just draw them in the box below. Remember to return these items where you found them.

What did you realise through the activity?

How would you adapt it for your class?

Choose the items, find them around the preschool and draw them in the box.

- **Something fuzzy**
- **Something round**
- **Something rough**
- **Something smooth**
- **A feather**
- **Something you think is pretty**
- **Something that makes a noise**
- **Something that flies or floats**
- **4 different leaves**
- **Something brown**
- **A rock**
- **A stick**



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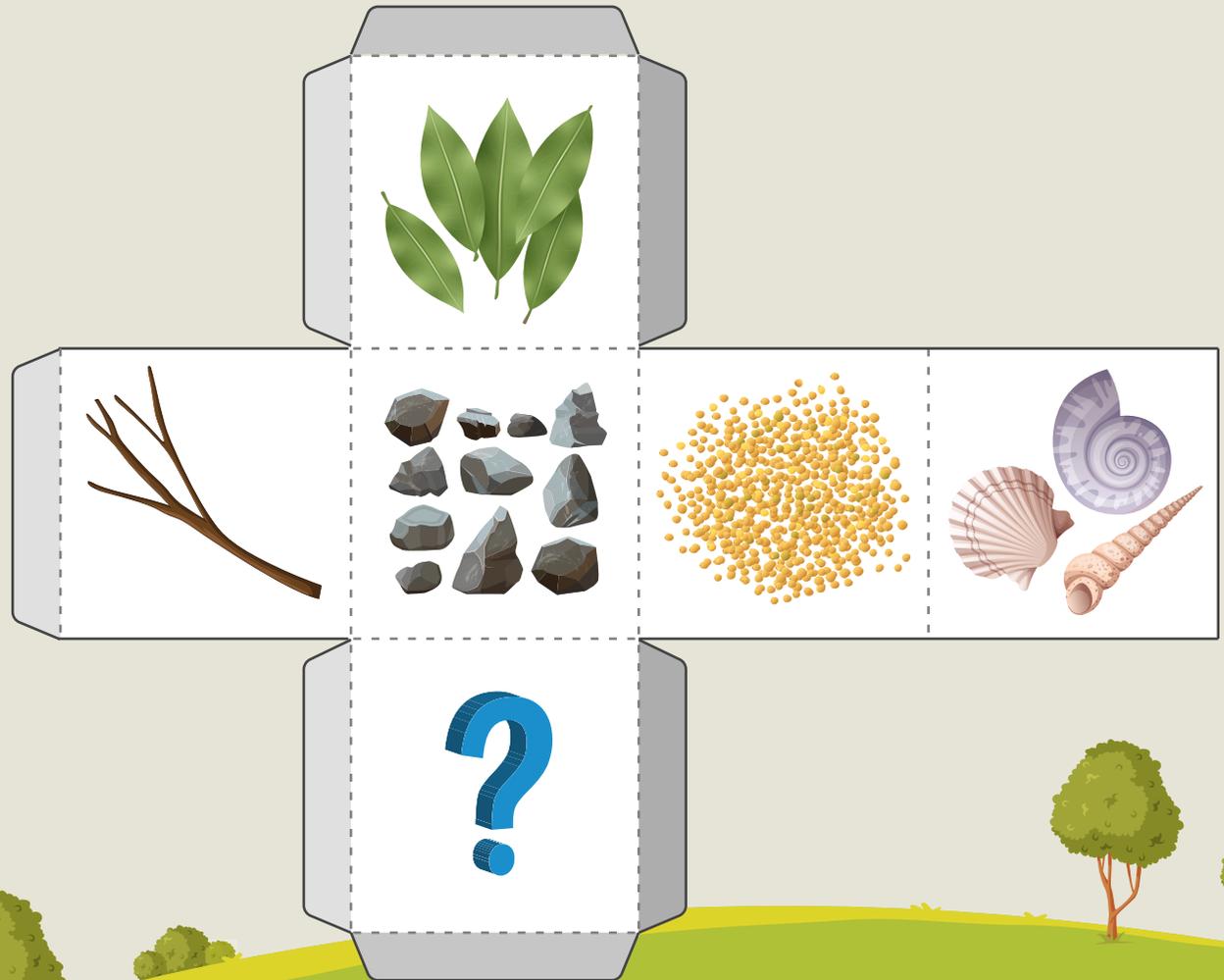
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Nature Discovery Walk

The next time you have a meeting, try a 'walking meeting' instead. As you move around, use this cube as a discussion starter during the walk and have everyone look around for these items. Ask educators to select an object on the cube and share a memory related to the item.

How would you adapt this for children?

How would you extend this activity?



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Examining Our Lens

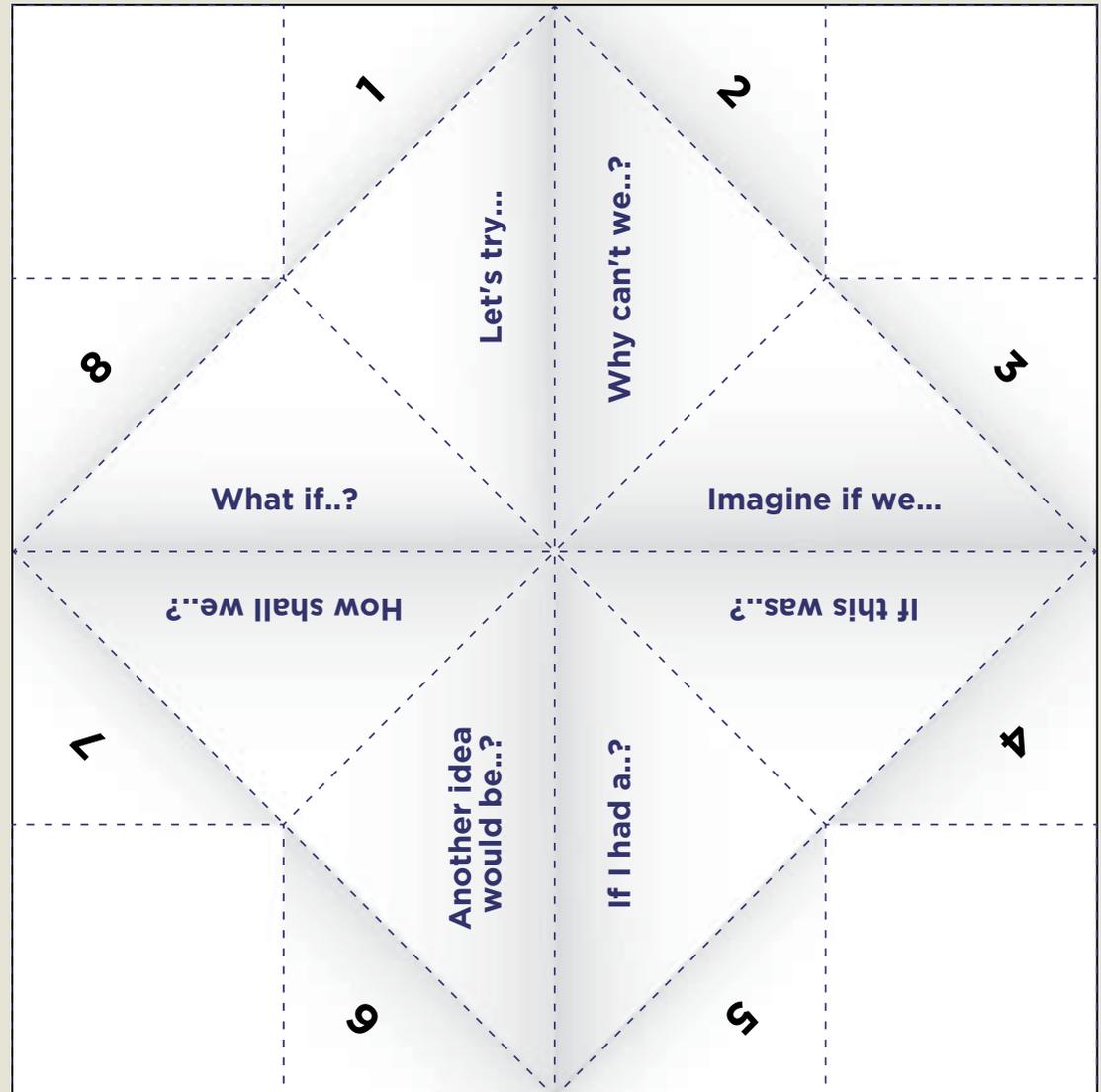
Use the "fortune-teller template" to challenge your thinking when planning for an outdoor activity.

Challenge yourself and your fellow educators to view how you use the outdoor space differently.

You can use these question prompts with the preschoolers!

Instructions:

1. Fold the paper diagonally in half to form a triangle, crease the fold and unfold. Repeat this step for the other side.
2. Fold the paper into half from top to bottom, crease the fold and unfold. Repeat this step for the other side.
3. Bring the four corners to the centre of the paper.
4. Flip the paper over and fold the four corners into the centre again.
5. To use the fortune teller, slide your thumb and index fingers into the slots under the square.



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Recycled Planters

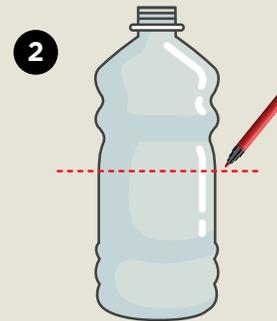
Even if it is difficult to go outdoors on some days, you can start to bring the outdoors in. Natural items around the classroom can be calming and beautify the space too.

Create a green corner for the centre using this planter making activity. It can be a bonding activity with educators or with even with parents.

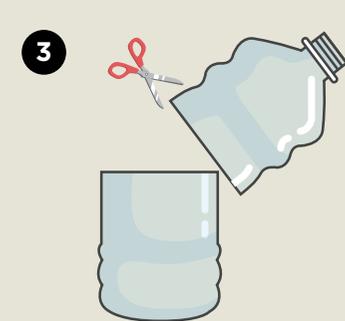
Paste the inspiring message on the bottle!



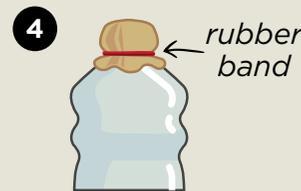
1 Plastic bottle



2 Mark 1/2 way



3 Cut half



4 Cover mouth with cloth



5 Add dirt and plant



6 Add water

Instructions:

1. Find an empty plastic bottle (1.5L bottle recommended).
2. Measure the bottle and mark the bottle at the halfway point using a marker.
3. Cut the bottle using a penknife or scissors.
4. Remove the bottle cap. Cover the mouth of the bottle with a small piece of cloth and secure the cloth with a rubber band.
5. With the mouth at the base, add dirt and your plant into the plastic bottle.
6. Add water into the bottom half of the bottle before inserting the top half into it (ensure the mouth of the bottle is submerged in the water).
7. Cut out an inspiring message that you like, laminate it and paste it on the bottle!

7



Mother nature has the best box of crayons

Not all classrooms have four walls

When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower

Play is the highest form of research

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