

25 Games to Play Outdoors

The following activities encourage outdoor play in fun and easy to resource ways.
Enjoy!

Game	How to play	Curriculum links
Musical statues	Children find a space and the adult plays some music. The music might be played through a set of speakers or could be made using percussion instruments. The children who are still moving when the music stops are out and become the judges. This activity is great for supporting children's listening and attention skills as they tune into the sound of the music.	Phase 1 phonics Communication and language Physical development Expressive arts and design
Talent show stage	Set up a simple stage area using crates or pallets. The children can use the stage to rehearse and perform acts such as telling jokes, re-enacting their favourite film scenes or singing songs and rhymes.	Expressive arts and design Communication and language
Simon Says	An adult to lead the first time to show the children what to. The adult gives instructions for the children to follow. The children should only follow the instruction if the adult says 'Simon Says' first. Possible instructions would be 'stand up', 'sit down', 'hop on one foot'.	Communication and language Physical development
I Spy	I spy with my little eye, something beginning with... A great game for teaching children alliteration by listening out for the first sound (phoneme) in a word. For younger children this could be adapted to identifying colours or shapes for example-I spy...something that is green, round, square.	Communication and language Mathematics Understanding the World
Follow the sound	Hide a noisy object or toy in the outdoor area and ask the children to find it by following the sound. If a toy is not available a child could be hidden somewhere and either shout their name, clap or play a percussion instrument until he/she is found.	Communication and language Phase 1 phonics
Follow the action/copy me	An adult leads to begin with performing an action that the children copy. This might be a clap, a gesture or short dance.	Personal, social and emotional development Communication and language Physical development
Hoop games	Children can be given their own hoop. Hoops can be used as 'space ships' or 'cars' to help children learn about special awareness. They can also be used for target games and for skipping.	Physical development
Bubbles	Bubbles are engaging for younger and older children alike! Babies may want to simply watch the bubbles and pop them with their hands while older children may want to chase them and blow the bubbles themselves. Making sounds as children pop the bubbles is great for communication and language development.	Personal, social and emotional development Physical development Communication and language development

Traditional games such as Hopscotch	Traditional games such as Hopscotch can help children to follow rules, count and coordinate their movements.	PSED Physical development Mathematics
Mark making	Children could have their own set of mark making materials for outdoor play. This may include chunky chalk, sticks, stones and water with paint brushes. Children love to make their mark!	Physical development Literacy
Skipping	Children could have their own skipping ropes and be taught some basic skipping techniques. This requires lots of patience and coordination as well as lots of available space.	Physical development
Natural obstacle courses	Look for trees and other natural obstacles that children can climb on, crawl under and generally explore.	Physical development Understanding the World
Creating nature pictures	Children can collect natural object such as sticks, leaves and stones and arrange them to make different pictures. Photographs could be taken so that children can re-use their objects several times.	Expressive arts and design Understanding the world
Bug hunts	Lots of our early years children love bugs! Finding rocks, bricks, patches of damp soil and such places can be great in the search for bugs. Encourage children to take their time and talk about what they find.	Understanding the world Communication and language Personal, social and emotional development
Tracing shadows	Try tracing shadows onto the ground using chalks at different times of the day. Children will be fascinated by the ways their shadow moves and changes shape during the day.	Understanding the world Personal, social and emotional development Physical development
Shadow puppets	Great for sunny days, showing children how to make shadow puppets can be lots of fun. Children trying to make the puppets themselves is good for their physical development, particularly their fine motor control.	Physical development Understanding the world
Nature scavenger hunt	Giving the children a list of things to find around the outdoor area can be as open or closed ended as you wish. You could add positional language to your instructions or number and counting, for example find 5 leaves from under the tree, collect 2 sticks from behind the flower bed. Alternatively ask the children to think of their own ideas e.g. find something shiny, something spiky, something smooth. Lists can be written or shared verbally for children to listen to and remember.	Mathematics Communication and language Understanding the world
Timed challenges	Challenges can be timed using a stop-watch or by counting aloud depending on children's stage of development. Examples may include: How quickly can you run to the fence? How many leaves can you pick up in 20 seconds? How many times can you jump up and down before I count to 10?	Mathematics
Find the bear	Hide a cuddly toy (or any toy) in the outdoor area. Give the children a series of instructions to help them find the toy. This is a perfect activity for introducing positional language-up, down, under, behind etc.	Mathematics Communication and language

A listening moment	Encourage the children to be as quiet as they can and listen carefully for a minute (or as long as they can manage!) Ask the children to share what they could hear. This activity will help children to tune into the sounds around them.	Communication and language Phase 1 phonics
Bird watching	Try to find birds in the sky or trees in and around your outdoor area. Encourage the children to describe what they are seeing and count how many of each bird they have found.	Understanding the world Communication and language
Story telling	Outdoors can be the perfect setting for telling familiar stories and making up new ones. No books needed! Adults and children can let their imagination run free. Story telling can be a fantastic way to introduce children to new vocabulary and magical new worlds.	Communication and language Literacy
Shape hunt	Looking for shapes and introducing children to the language of shape can be done by talking about the shapes we can see all around. The windows may be square for example or there may be rectangular fence panels. See how many the children can find and add as much new language as you can while they are pointing out the shapes such as round, pointed, flat.	Mathematics Communication and language
Be active, be loud!	The outdoor environment is the best place for children to explore the space and identify how their bodies move. Allowing children to run, jump, climb, dance and crawl is essential for their physical development. Outdoors is also a good place to let out all the noise that children have in them!	Physical development
Rest and relax!	Just being outside can have many benefits to health and wellbeing. Sometimes just enjoying the fresh air and the weather is enough. It is important for children to experience the outdoors in different conditions so getting out on sunny days, windy days and rainy days is important.	PSED Understanding the world