Connecting to Nature

Earth Day Birthday Cake

Celebrating the world together, by creating this very messy mud cake, connects children not only to the Earth, but also to the other members of the group



Kit: water • containers to carry water • trowels/small spades

1. Choose a spot with lots of soil for your Earth Day celebrations.

2. Collect water and transport it to the designated cake-making station.

3. Trowels in hand, everyone can dig a hole. Pour water into the hole, then put the loose soil back in. Stir with a stick to make mud.

4. Using trowels or bare hands, pile the mud up in a chosen spot, moulding it into whatever shape you like, before decorating with feathers, stones or fallen petals from the forest floor.

5. Add some stick candles and gather to sing 'Happy Birthday' to the Earth!

Autumn's Rainbow

Both active and creative, this fallen-leaf activity revels in the colours of autumn

Kit: small bucket to carry water

1. Choose a spot of woodland with multi-coloured leaves on the ground and a nearby water source (if there is none you will need to bring water with you).

2. Go through the colours of the rainbow with the group, then let everyone explore the area and find the ideal spot to make their own rainbow – on the ground, a fallen log or a large rock, for example.

3. Now it's time to mix some mud! Combine water with some dirt dug from shallow holes in the ground, using sticks to stir it together.

4. Grab some mud and sculpt a rainbow outline: it can be long and thin, or even a full circle – invite full imagination here! Gather up some leaves that show the changing colours of autumn.

5. Push the leaves into the mud in whatever order the maker chooses to create their own idea of an autumn rainbow.

6. Stand back and admire the colourful view!

Forest Crafts

Wood-Cookie Man

Magically transform wood into a human figure and develop tool-use skills

Kit: gardening gloves • hand-held folding saw • palm drill • pipe cleaners • permanent marker pens

1. Find a branch about 30cm (a foot) long, 4cm (1½in) in diameter for the head and another roughly 5–6cm (2–2½in) in diameter for the body.

2. With glove on the non-working hand, saw off the end of the smaller branch. Move the saw 2cm (¾in) along the branch and cut off another section. This disc is your wood-cookie man's head! Saw another disc from the larger branch for his body.

3. Use a palm drill to make a hole through the small cookie, close to the edge. Repeat the process with the larger branch, but this time drill five holes around the edge.

4. Using a pipe cleaner, attach the two discs (the head and body) at one of the five holes (this will be the neck). Thread a pipe cleaner through each of the other four holes to add arms and legs.

5. Decorate freely with marker pens!

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.

Survival Skills

Log Cabin Fire

This fire is particularly good for damp weather, and perfect for cooking on

Kit: firewood • kindling, fire steel • cotton wool • Vaseline

1. Start to build the 'log cabin' by placing two logs of roughly equal length parallel to one another on the ground about two hand-widths apart.

2. Place two more of the same-sized logs aross the ends of the lower logs, making a square.

3. Make a raft with some kindling aross the upper logs, then place the tinder and a piece of Vaseline-smeared cotton wool in the middle.

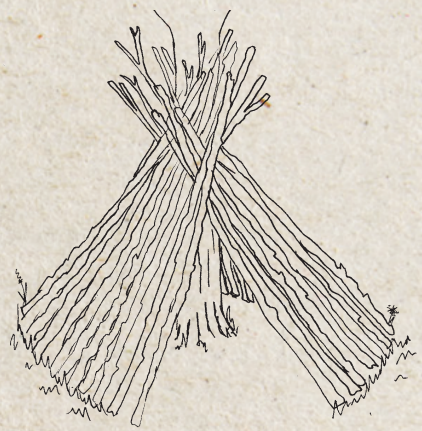
4. Now build up the log cabin around the tinder, mirroring the pattern on the base.

5. Go up a couple of layers and add another raft of kindling across this layer, and then continue to build the log cabin up around this for another couple of layers.

6. Your fire is now ready for lighting!

Tepee Shelter

A shelter in the woods is a child's home in nature, a place separate from the adult world. Work together as a team to build your outdoor home!



1. Choose a tree as the central support for the den, check for safety (dead wood or hanging branches) and ground conditions such as ants or litter.

2. Gather long branches and lean them at angles in a circle around the central supporting tree, leaving a gap for the door.

3. Pile up earth or logs at the base of the branches to hold them in place.

4. Weave thinner, bendy sticks through the branches to create walls. If you wish, fill in the walls with gathered leaves.

5. Scatter more leaves over the ground as a carpet, then make yourself at home in your new tepee shelter!

Team Games

Forest Fire

This game is full of the energy of fire and is a great way to start the day

1. Set the boundaries of a large rectangular playing space (i.e. with coats or bags), and choose who will be the fire.

2. Everyone else now comes up with three species likely to live locally. Each player chooses which species they want to be, keeping it secret.

3. The fire stands in the middle and all the 'creatures' gather at one shorter end of the rectangle, which is the 'home' safe base.

4. When the fire calls out the name of a species, e.g. 'RABBIT!', all 'rabbits' have to run to the home base at the opposite end. Anyone caught by the fire becomes part of the fire (who now hold hands and move as one). Those who make it to the safe end, then run back to the opposite home base.

5. If the fire shouts 'FOREST FIRE!', then everyone has to run.

6. The game continues until only one person remains uncaught by the fire – this is the winner!

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.