Learning On Your Doorstep



LOW-COST AND NO-COST IDEAS FOR EARLY YEARS ADVENTURES

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2 Preparing to go out

Now we've covered the benefits of getting out into your local area with children, it's time to move onto the practicalities. In this chapter we look at how you can decide where to take your children and how to complete a risk assessment for your outings, then we'll finish by providing you with advice for how to prepare a successful outing.

Where can you go?

Children's understanding of the world begins in the home. As their experiences broaden, they become increasingly aware of the wider world and gradually develop interest in the world beyond their own direct experience. Some children's experiences of the world may be more extensive than others. They may have been on holiday or been to visit family members or friends living in places outside of their local area. Distances do not seem the same to children as they do to us as adults, due to both physical and perceptual differences; an adult's step is two or three steps to a young child.

When considering where to take children on an outing, use Figure 2.1 below to think about places and experiences that might expand and consolidate children's learning.

Identify destinations that you want to visit or features you will come across on the journey. Start in the smallest circle and consider which aspects of the local area could be used as a starting point. Then gradually move out through the circles. This exercise will highlight just how rich your local area is and how much learning potential is available on your doorstep.

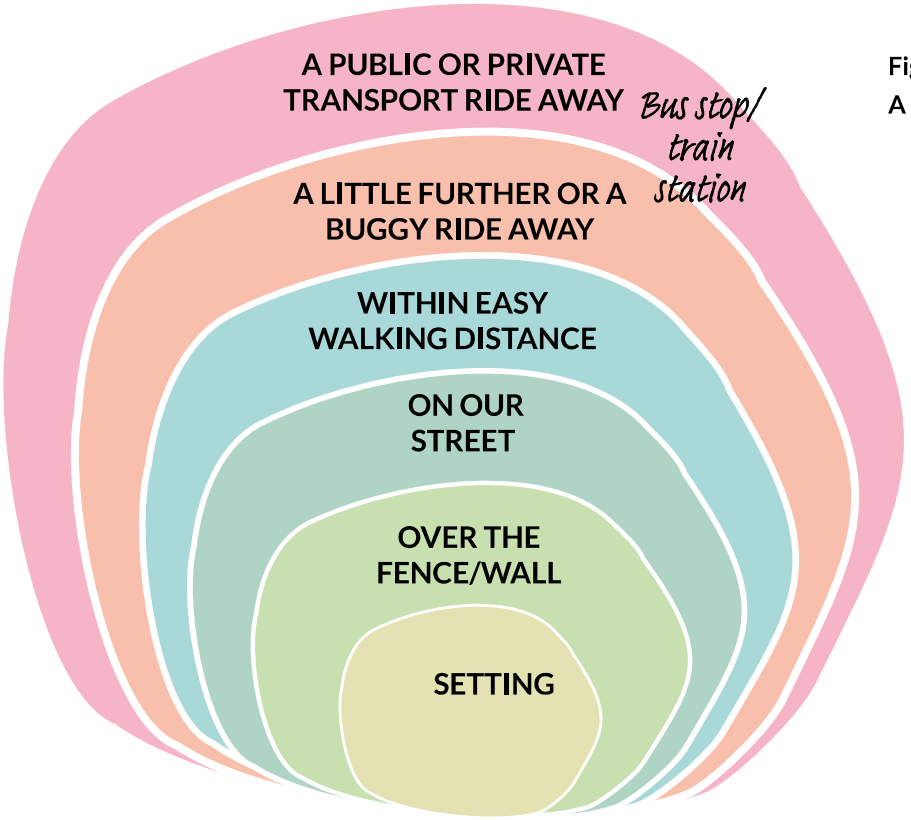


Figure 2.1:
A local area map

Starting with what is known and familiar builds confidence for both children, families and practitioners if they are anxious about going out. Although the circles suggest that you should gradually increase the distance travelled, there may be times when you are able to 'skip ahead' to another stage. For example, babies in pushchairs could be taken further than toddlers who are just starting to walk to nearby places. There may be a certain event or facility you would like to use in the local area which would involve taking children further out before they have explored aspects of what is closer to the setting.

Here is an example of a local area map with rural and urban examples. They can be adapted or added to for your own setting and are a starting point for your thinking with your team or for yourself.

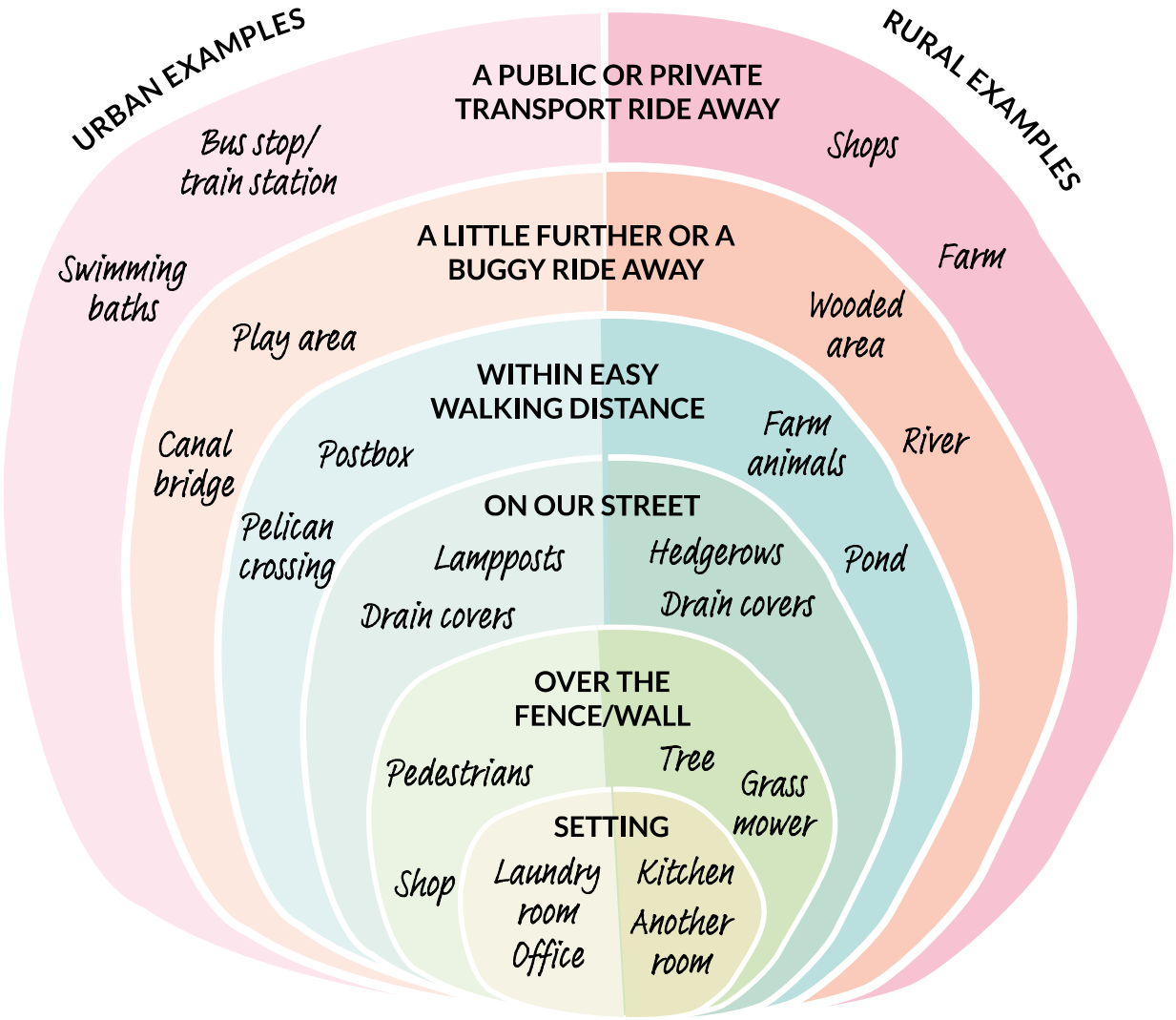


Figure 2.2: A local area map with urban and rural examples

Making repeated visits

As we saw in Chapter 1, making regular visits to the same place is really beneficial for children's learning and development. Repeating a walk or going back to the same feature in your local area over the course of a set time period gives you the opportunity to build on children's experiences and develop the complexity of their learning.

Progression of skills and knowledge

The table below gives a general overview of how to extend thinking and learning over time.

LESS EXPERIENCED	MORE EXPERIENCED	HIGHER LEVEL OF CHALLENGE
Explore. Talk about what you see, hear, smell, feel and notice. Label features. Observe what children do.	Focus on aspects that capture the children's interest. Extend relevant vocabulary. Select resources to enhance the experience. Note any changes that have occurred.	Let children explore in more depth. Reflect back on previous experiences. Encourage use of more technical vocabulary. Set challenges.

Adapting to children's individual experiences

Throughout Chapters 4–10 we have provided you with progressive ideas for how you can extend children's thinking and learning over time, both on outings and back in the setting. We've split the progression of the learning opportunities into three categories: less experienced, more experienced and higher level of challenge. However, this is just a guide and you can adapt the progression of the opportunities depending on the individual children.



Progression of skills and knowledge

The table below shows some of the possibilities for demonstrating progress in children's learning in different areas of the EYFS curriculum when a particular place is visited regularly. We've used the example of a wooded area. It does not show every aspect of the learning offered but gives a flavour of what is possible. You can use it as a stimulus for framing learning potential offered by places in your local area.

AREAS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT	LESS EXPERIENCED	MORE EXPERIENCED	HIGHER LEVEL OF CHALLENGE
Characteristics of effective learning	Use their curiosity to explore.	Make links and notice patterns as they explore.	Start to develop ideas of cause and effect, and sequence.
Communication and language	Become aware of a range of sounds in the natural environment.	Learn the names of things found in the natural world.	Learn and use a broader range of vocabulary related to the natural world.
Physical development	Move around, learning to negotiate obstacles over uneven terrain.	Move around the woodland terrain with increasing skill and confidence.	Use their growing strength and safety knowledge to set themselves physical challenges within this environment.
Personal, social and emotional development	Be guided by adults to keep themselves safe.	Follow rules and begin to understand why they are important.	Show awareness of how to keep themselves safe.
Literacy	Explore themes from stories set in a woodland setting.	Work with adults to create story themes with a woodland context.	Develop their own story lines within this real context.
Mathematics	Make and explore collections of objects.	Describe the attributes, similarities and differences of their object collections.	Use collections to compare and contrast shape, numbers, etc.
Understanding the World	Use their senses to explore natural objects and environments.	Develop understanding of change in the natural world.	Understand the importance of caring for the natural world and their own responsibility to this.
Expressive arts and design	Play with and arrange natural materials.	Use their own ideas to select and use natural materials creatively.	Create collaboratively – contributing ideas, skills and resources.

Risk assessment

Risk assessment will be an important part of the planning stage of your outings into the local area. Before getting started, have a go at the following exercise.

Encountering difficult situations

Read the following scenario and decide which action to take.

While out walking with the children, you come across an injured animal/bird.

Which of the following would you do?

- ☐ Move the children quickly away from the scene and carry on with what you planned.
- ☐ Carry on with your planned outing but ensure a member of staff contacts a relevant support group (e.g. RSPB, vet practice).
- ☐ Stop and deal with the incident with the children and involve them in what to do.
- ☐ Respond to a child's plea to collect the creature, take it back to setting and nurse it back to health.
- ☐ Another solution of your own.

Now, reflect for a moment. How did you find this exercise? Did you find it easy to decide which action to take? This scenario has been set out as a way of looking at a situation that could arise on an outing. The answers suggested are not right or wrong, just different ways of dealing with things. You may well come up with some alternative or blended solutions that work for you.

Other possible scenarios you could consider:

- There is a Big Issue seller who operates close to your setting. Almost every time you go out with the children they are there and ask you to buy their magazine.
- You often come across dog mess which hasn't been picked up.
- You have a staff member who feels that taking the children out is too dangerous.
- You have a family that doesn't want their child to go on any outings.
- A staff member wishes to take one or two children out on their own.
- You have a staff member who feels their physical fitness makes particular outings and places inaccessible for them.
- The last time the children went to the local park, the staff found signs of drug use.
- Staff members sometimes encounter friends who are keen to stop and chat.