

# Education in the Green Space



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## **What this booklet aims to do!**

This booklet provides easy ways to make the most out of any outdoors space you have at school, with easy activities that kids can do.

All the things that need to be considered before going outside are included in the 'EIGS Guide to taking kids outside' section, including risk assessments and kit lists.

# What is the Education in the Green Space project all about?

We believe that all children should spend **meaningful time outside**. In schools, due to mainly curriculum constraints, there is now less time spent outdoors.

By spending time outside, children learn to **identify risks** and also develop a better **appreciation for the natural world**.

In the UK, generally people can identify all the fantastic wildlife they see on TV but struggle to identify what is in their gardens. Without a change, this trend is only going to get worse.

The resources the project has produced aim to show how **easy** it is to take your class outdoors and what **curriculum focussed activities** can be done, with very little planning.

“The children absolutely loved it and have really been inspired - they have been finding creepy crawlies every day since!”

*Teacher feedback.*

## How to make the most of your outside space

This section of the guide shows some ways you, and your class, can make use of any outside space you may have.

Lots of the teachers we visited said that they have no green space, only concrete areas, so we've listed some quick and simple ways to make the best of these.

Some teachers also mentioned that they didn't know how to identify the plants around their school grounds, so that's why we've included the Easy Peasy Playground Spotters Guide. A more in detail guide can be found on our website.



**Oak Tree**

Regularly found round school grounds. In Autumn some of the fallen acorns will have teeth marks from squirrels!







## Easy Peasy Play-ground Spotters Guide

### Silver Birch

Spot the silver bark that peels off like paper



### Horse Chestnut

This tree is best known for making conkers



### Beech

The leaves of this tree are always wavy



## Mini-meadows and Pollinator planters

**This is a really easy way of turning an area of concrete into a great nature area which will hopefully attract lots of minibeasts.**

**Pupils can also learn about the lifecycle of a plant through watching the plants grow (they could keep a plant diary).**

**There also curriculum links here to Art, English and Maths if you wanted.**



Found at:

[www.meadowinmygarden.co.uk](http://www.meadowinmygarden.co.uk)

**You can always make  
your own arts and  
craft meadow!  
(@sotonbioblitz)**



### What you need

- Big planters/plant pots
- Soil
- Wild flower seeds



- \* If you already have large planters on a concrete area at school, great! If not you could have a look at these suggestions on how to make your own out of old tires ([www.handimania.com](http://www.handimania.com)) or buy one.
- \* Plant some wild flowers! You can buy packets of wild flower seeds very cheaply.
- \* If you have any scraps of grass land around the school grounds which are not used for anything, you could always let these go wild (stop mowing them and let nature take over). If the idea of things like stinging nettles and brambles isn't your cup of tea, you could plant wild flowers there as well. These scraps of unused land make great mini meadows.
- \* As a bonus, you can build bug hotels up around the bases of the planters, providing the minibeasts and bees that live in them a tasty treat! The plants will also attract more bugs to the hotels.

## Bug Hotels

These are a classic when thinking of how to make an area more wildlife friendly. They are also great at showing how the microhabitat helps determine the mini-beasts you'll find. For example if you put your bug hotel in a sunny place you will get a totally different set of guests to if you put it in a damp shady place.

### What you need

- Bamboo
- Cotton wool
- Decorations
- String
- Old drinks bottle



Found at: [www.tcv.org.uk](http://www.tcv.org.uk)

You can make bug hotels out of nearly anything, recycled materials such as butter tubs and cardboard tubes are perfect, there are lots of examples online of different types.

This bug hotel is made by taking a role of bamboo bedding border and taking the wire out so you have a pile of short, hollow, bamboo poles of the same length.

Then taking a clump of bamboo, put them in a cut up drinks bottle (for waterproofing) and tie them together, put some cotton wool down the insides and decorated!





For solitary bees, among others, the type of bug hotel shown below is perfect. These bees do not live in a hive and hibernate through the winter on their own. By putting some cotton wool down the tubes you can give them a nice snug bed for winter!

Found at: <http://permaculturenews.org/-insect-hotel/>

**Lots of the materials used can be recycled or found in your school grounds, like twigs and pine cones**

Some great bug hotel resorts have been made by schools, where they have used a stack of shipping pallets. The pupils have then made their own bug hotels, in various designs, to outfit this bug skyscraper.

Throughout the year you can have a look at the different residents as a class.



Found at: [susanrushton.net](http://susanrushton.net)

# E.I.G.S. Guide to taking kids outside!

This part of the booklet aims to provide basic guidance on taking lessons outside. It is particularly aimed at those teachers who lack confidence or experience in doing so.

## Important things to consider

**Weather** - *it is important to think about the direction of the sun and wind. Ideally your class should be downwind of you so your voice carries towards them, and be facing with their backs to the sun so they can see you clearly.*

**Structure** – *there is an element of experimentation to outdoor learning, and often it can pay off to keep lessons flexible as children may find something you didn't expect or come up with a different solution to a challenge. However having a basic structure and a focused activity based on the topic you want to learn about forms a good central foundation that can be built upon.*

**Curriculum and learning** – *outdoor activities are particularly good for catering to different learning styles, cross-curricular learning and can promote reinforcement of learning done in the classroom. Therefore it is a good opportunity to plan lessons around these concepts.*

**Assessment methods** – *not being able to demonstrate progress during outdoor learning can be a concern for some teachers, however there are ways to record the achievements and learning that happen outside. Photos of activities and products of activities, as well as children's quotes and your observations of their achievements noted on post-its, can be stuck in their exercise books or form a display. Keeping field books or nature journals is another good idea, as well as encouraging class discussion and feedback afterwards, perhaps with groups giving presentations on their discoveries.*

**Pre-existing fears and perceptions** – *be sympathetic towards children that may be nervous of going outside, attitudes at home can amplify worries of ‘stranger danger’ or a need to keep clean and tidy. Gentle encouragement and positive experiences outdoors should really build their confidence and help them realise that dirt is not a bad thing!*

**Behaviour and expectations** – *entering a new environment can be exciting, and as much as you want children to have more freedom in the outdoor classroom it is a good idea to clarify beforehand that most of the same behavioural expectations apply as in the classroom (listening, being polite and respectful etc). It can also be useful to set up a meeting point, and boundaries if necessary, so that if the class are off exploring they know how far they can go and where to return on hearing a signal such as a whistle (you could even make it a race)!*

**Adult helpers** – *encourage adult helpers to show enthusiasm even if the outdoors is not their cup of tea. Indifferent or negative reactions from adults towards things such as findings and weather conditions can limit or diminish a class’s eagerness for the lesson.*

#### Example structure

1. A talk or starter in the classroom, thinking about the topic and activity, and setting up expectations
2. Walk to area of main activity. This could be an activity in itself to engage the class, such as a spotting game (e.g. collect as many different leaves as you can on the way/see if you can spot 3 green things, 2 blue things and 1 yellow thing).
3. Main activity
4. Walk back. This could be used for discussion and a summary.

## Understanding the Risks

Throughout our project we have discovered there are a lot of concerns about the risks involved with taking children outside, and this can be a big barrier to outdoor education. This is understandable as a lot of societal perceptions view the outside world as dangerous to children; however a lot of these dangers are overplayed or easily avoided.

If you can identify the hazards outdoors and address them with suitable control measures, outdoor learning is a very low risk activity. Some teachers have expressed that they find it hard to recognise hazards that may exist out of doors, therefore we have come up with a simple 'hazard tick list' with some example hazards you might find in your school grounds.

- Brambles, holly, other prickly plants
- Nettles
- Low hanging branches, dead trees
- Uneven, steep or slippery ground
- Proximity to roads and traffic
- Poisonous fungi and berries
- Open water
- Animal mess
- Rabbit holes or other hidden dips
- Large or sharp rocks

## **How to approach a risk assessment.**

If you lack confidence with creating risk assessments, a simple step by step is provided below.

1. Start by identifying the hazards, and the possible scenarios that could arise from these. The majority of hazards you will encounter are included in the hazard tick list or example risk assessment.
2. Estimate the rating of the inherent risk (the risk without any control measures in place). There are risk/hazard matrices available for this, your school or organisation may have its own.
3. Develop control measures for each hazard. Often these are simple solutions, like advising caution and carrying a first aid kit. Some ideas are provided in the example risk assessment.
4. Estimate the rating of the residual risk (the risk with control measures in place). Often these will come out as low in most outdoor education scenarios.

On the next page is our example risk assessment for leading groups outdoors. You can use this as a basis and tailor the format to fit the procedure of your school.



## Example Risk Assessment

Identifying the hazards - assessing the risks		
Hazards in the Outdoor Environment	Potential Risks	Inherent Risk Rating (No Controls)
Movement around the outdoor environment	Uneven surfaces and trip hazards resulting in falls	Low
Soil, water, or airborne pollen or bacteria	Hayfever, Weil's disease, sepsis etc.	Low
Animals	Bee/wasp stings, insect bites or animal mess	Low
Natural objects within the environment	Scratches or stings from thorns and nettles, eating berries or fungi	Medium
Ponds and other water bodies	Exposure and drowning	Medium
Traffic	Collisions with moving vehicles	Medium
Medical conditions	Allergic reactions to bites or stings	Medium
Weather Exposure (Sun, Wind, Rain, Temperature)	Sunburn, Hyperthermia, Hypothermia, Slippery surfaces	Medium



These are examples of risks you may identify outside.

<b>Control measures - reducing the risks</b>	
<b>Controls (Measures to reduce risk)</b>	<b>Residual Risk Rating (With Controls)</b>
Encourage awareness of surroundings and keep a first aid kit on hand.	Low
Cuts and grazes should be disinfected and covered with a plaster. Water found outside should not be drunk. Wash hands before eating.	Low
Encourage awareness of animal mess, if possible check area beforehand. Keep a first aid kit on hand.	Low
Encourage awareness of these objects and keep a first aid kit on hand.	Low
Close supervision to be maintained around water bodies, children provided with clear safety instructions.	Low
Close supervision to be maintained around roads, crossings to be done in small groups with adults traffic spotting.	Low
Staff members to be aware of conditions and appropriate medications to be carried in first aid kit.	Low
Wearing appropriate clothing (waterproof, layers, hat). Use of sun cream, working in shade on very sunny days. Encourage awareness of slippery areas, particularly steps. Move indoors in the event of extreme weather conditions, such as very high winds or storms.	Low



These are examples of how you'd control these risks.

## Kit List

The ideal kit depends on how long you are going to be outside, and how far you will be from the school buildings. If you're still close to the classroom, a lot of these things may not be necessary or could be kept inside. If you've moving off site to a nearby green space, taking rucksacks with some of these items should help the lesson run smoother and avoid taking time moving back and forth.

It's important for you and the class to be comfortable! Dressing appropriately for the weather can ensure this, wearing layers if it's cold, and hats and sun cream in hot weather. Waterproofs are also a bonus, and some schools even have welly banks, which is a great idea if muddy feet are a concern but not many of the children have their own pair.

### **Keeping Comfortable**

**Water** – *dehydration is a regular issue, especially if it's hot or windy and you're doing a lot of talking. It's a good idea to have a little extra as well in case some children do not have their own or enough.*

**Biscuits** – *in case a sugar pick me up is needed.*

**Spare gloves** – *small hands can get cold very quickly.*

**Sun Cream** – *often children will forget this themselves or not put on enough.*

**Hairbands** – *long hair can be distracting if it is windy.*

**Rug/Tarpaulin** – *a place to sit and focus whilst avoiding wet bums.*

**Sunglasses** – *often you will be talking to children whilst facing the sun so they don't have to.*

**Tissues** – *for runny noses.*

## **Safety and Hygiene**

**First Aid Kit** – *an essential item, at the minimum should contain bite/sting relief, antiseptic wipes, plasters, and carefully labelled medication for pre-existing conditions.*

**Risk Assessment** – *a useful reference for risks and controls.*

**Hazard ‘Spotter’ Tick List** – *for making on the go assessments in new areas.*

**Mobile Phone** – *in case an emergency call needs to be made. Also useful for taking photos and looking up interesting facts and answers!*

**Emergency Contact Details** – *in case of emergency.*

**Wet Wipes/ Antibacterial gel** – *for messy sticky fingers before eating.*

**Whistle** – *to attract immediate attention in case of an emergency.*

## **Useful Extras**

**Camera** - *for taking photos of interesting finds and exciting moments. Photos also provide a record of what the class has achieved.*

**Sample pots** – *this could be old plastic herb jars or glue pots, ideal for bug collecting or storing interesting finds.*

**Field books** – *having a field book or outdoors journal is a relaxed way for children to draw or write about what they see and do, whilst also providing a record of progress.*

**ID guides or keys** – *enables children to work out what they’ve found and practice ID and classification skills using books or cards, such as those produced by the FSC.*

**Bucket** – *for storing finds or clearing up litter.*

**Plastic Bag** – *also useful for samples and cleaning up mess.*

## And finally....

We hope this guide has been useful to you.

Remember that going outside is fun! Don't get too panicked if the kids get covered in mud or try to eat a worm, it's all part of them learning about their surrounding.

For more information, outdoor learning activities, useful links to online resources (such as apps, games and videos) as well as some lesson ideas and worksheets head to our website (details on back cover)

Many thanks to all the teachers and schools who gave us feedback.

This booklet and the resources provided in the pack have been developed from this information.





Poster of garden wildlife made by a Southampton Primary School Eco Club

**Education in the Green Space is a public engagement project run jointly by the University of Southampton's Schools of Biological Sciences and Education. It is funded by NERC (the National Environmental Research Council).**

**The project started in January 2017 with the aim of providing resources teachers can use to make it easier to take their classes outside.**

**This booklet is designed to support and boost confidence in teachers wanting to take their class outside. It contains ideas for making the most of your school grounds and a rough guide to taking kids outside.**

Follow the links on our social media pages for links to our website, containing online resources, worksheets and activities.



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