



Section 8 - Practical Activities



PRACTICAL ACTIVITY SHEETS

“...the (activities) I most enjoyed were the nettle soup, the dream catchers and the story telling. The first because I was amazed at how readily they all got over their initial fears of eating nettles and got stuck in, the second because of the level of concentration that was required and how unusual it was to see these kids so engaged and the third because the least likely pupil was the one who ended up shining on this day.”

Ewan Hardie, Teacher, Drummond Community High School Edinburgh

As a Forest School leader you will want to have a wide variety of fun, relevant and practical activities up your sleeve so that you can introduce them as appropriate to enhance the Forest School session. The following are grouped into areas linked with aspects of ‘Planning a Programme’ described earlier in this pack. Categories are not hard and fast. Activities should be shared among the network of practitioners - practised, improved, refined and adapted - to meet individual needs.

Be aware how your Forest school activities can be structured to support the development of the whole child, and support the curriculum. The sensory element coupled with kinaesthetic learning that is part of all forest school activities is very important. It supports emotional learning, embedding experience in memory and the acquisition of new words.

For example, the development of language goes hand in hand with encouraging good listening skills. Different bird sounds are heard and can be described (‘sounds around’ activity), and the species named. Instructions are given to the group for, say, collecting sticks for the fire. The children need to understand and remember verbal instructions. Later, when prompted, the children can describe sticks as ‘thin as a pencil, or my pinkie’, and sticks as ‘thick as my thumb’, and sticks as ‘thick as my wrist’. For younger children this naming of parts of the body can be a huge step in language acquisition. For older children this helps them to begin to explore synonyms.

Exploring boundary activities can bring maths to life - estimating and measuring distances, and developing directional and mapping skills. Games like ‘1-2-3 where are you?’ help children develop a sense of place in the environment, and confidence to look after themselves and each other.



Natural materials allow children to express themselves as individuals.

Remember to be responsive, flexible and imaginative in your approach. As part of your session review and evaluation, why not ask the young people taking part in the activities what they liked and what could be better?

In addition to the selection of activities described in this pack, there are other sources of relevant activities.

The FEI website has a large selection of activities on its Learning Resources pages

http://www.foresteducation.org/learning_resources.php which can be selected according to subject themes and age groups.

SNH TeachingSpace website www.snh.org.uk/TeachingSpace has a large selection of activities under 8 topic areas ranging from woodlands to biodiversity, many of which can be used or adapted for a Forest School context.

Many activities have been sourced from Shropshire Forest School website

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/forestschoools.nsf/open/5C8EBFC4913F02278025711D005D0019>

You will also find additional activities described in the session plans for Early Years, Primary, Secondary/ Teenagers and Special Needs in the sample programmes section of this pack.

USEFUL GROUND RULES FOR ACTIVITIES

- ▶ Risk assess all activities
- ▶ Establish boundaries using the appropriate games and information for your group
- ▶ Establish rules for safe behaviour using games where appropriate
- ▶ Plan an activity from the user's perspective
- ▶ Keep activities small and simple
- ▶ Don't set unattainable targets
- ▶ The process is most important – a completed activity is only an outcome
- ▶ Be flexible
- ▶ If it's not working - change it
- ▶ Observe the participants during the process and learn from them
- ▶ All activities can be adapted to be age specific

Activities are divided into the following categories, which of course are not mutually exclusive. Why not add any new activities you discover to this list?

- **Ice breaking activities**

- ▶ Wood Cookies/ Name Necklaces
- ▶ Parachute Games
- ▶ Memory Games
- ▶ Pass The Pine Cone

- **Building confidence, establishing trust & supporting emotions**

- ▶ Trust Game With Rope
- ▶ Meet A Tree
- ▶ Clay Creatures

- **Establishing boundaries & exploring**

- ▶ 1-2-3 Where Are You?
- ▶ Journey Sticks
- ▶ Badger Trail
- ▶ Estimating Distances

- **Listening activities**

- ▶ Sound Map
- ▶ Bird Calling
- ▶ Find Your Flock

- **Making structures**

- ▶ Lashings & Knots
- ▶ Sawing Frame
- ▶ Shelter Building
- ▶ Weaving Hurdle Fences

- **Natural art & craft activities**

- ▶ Green Crowns
- ▶ Natural Weaving
- ▶ Dreamcatchers
- ▶ Puppet Making
- ▶ Elder Jewellery
- ▶ Natural Portraits

- **Storytelling & music**

- ▶ Stories
- ▶ Making Music
- ▶ Xylophones

- **Tool use**

- ▶ Safe Use Of Tools Check Sheets

- **Activities with fire**

- ▶ Establishing A Fire Site
- ▶ Collecting Sticks
- ▶ Building Fires
- ▶ Making A Log Screen or Heat Reflector

- **Campfire games**

- ▶ One, Apple, Dog
- ▶ Tree Shuffle

- **Campfire Cooking**

- ▶ Sustainable Lunch
- ▶ Nettle Soup

- **Reviewing & evaluating**

- ▶ Chuff Line
- ▶ Sally Squirrel Circle Time
- ▶ Magic Spots
- ▶ Special Place Invitation
- ▶ Forest School Song

“As a warm-up, before we sit down to discuss the session ahead of us, I ask the children to collect something and bring it back to the circle. We then play the game where we have to come up with the most ludicrous idea of what the item is used for e.g. a long piece of grass is the nose hair from the giant woolly-haired mouse mammoth from Leith etc). It’s a great icebreaker!”

Gillian Telfer, Biodiversity Officer for both East & West Dunbartonshire Councils.

Wood Cookies or Name Necklaces

6-8cm of drilled wood discs makes good rustic name badges. Children can decorate them with felt tip pens. Older children and teenagers may be able to use pyrography or chisels. This links well with an introduction to tool use and safe handling of tools.

Resources:

A small bow saw (or pre-cut slices of wood), drills, wood to rest on, string, scissors, glue

The activity:

1. This is a good introductory activity to make badges to enable the leader to get to know the names of children or later, to make woodland pendants
2. Place a small log of about 6 cm diameter in a frame designed for sawing or a vice and help the child saw off a slice of about 1 cm thickness
3. Place the slice on a rest and help the child drill a hole about 1 cm away from the edge of the wood
4. Cut a piece of string large enough to fit around the child’s head, thread this through the hole and tie. For young children use wool which will break more easily
5. Write the child’s name on it and the child can decorate it by gluing on leaves etc. found in the wood.



(Source: Shropshire Forest School creative activities)

Although most satisfaction is gained from making your own, pre-drilled or plain wood cookies are also available to order from: <http://outdoorlearning.bevandesign.co.uk/cookies.html>

Parachute games

Most youth services and many schools will have a parachute available, or try your local authority Active Schools co-ordinator. If you have a flat open area beside the woodland or site, a few minutes of parachute games are good icebreakers, especially if you have children from different settings.

All the children hold a corner of the outstretched parachute and the group co-ordinate making it rise and fall. Small numbers of children can then run under the parachute to swap places on command. This is good for getting to know their names. It needs a flat open area and shouldn't be done when the grass is damp.

Put in a few more suggestions of parachute games

Memory games

Spread a tarpaulin on the ground or gather in a circle as a group. Ask the children to collect 10 natural items to bring back to the circle. Then take turns remembering items removed.

Pass the pine cone

Groups of 6-8 children stand in a line. A pine cone is passed from the front of the line either over the heads or between the legs, to the back of the line, then the child at the back runs forward with the pine cone to the front to start again.

(Source: Shropshire Forest School activities)

Trust game with rope

This activity helps to promote group cohesion, physical activity and communication (social & emotional learning)

It can be a useful activity to calm a group, or to identify and resolve group problems and tensions. Some children can find it very difficult to relax and trust everyone to support them. They may show this in different ways – by refusing to take part, or by fooling about. Don't push anyone to take part if they are not comfortable, but encourage everyone to be supportive of each other.

- Set the scene – you may want to hide the rope to be discovered in a treasure tree or similar spot.
When it is found, discuss how it is important in Forest School to be able to rely on each other and trust one another.
- One large polypropylene rope with its ends tied.
- Children hold the rope in a circle.

- Everyone leans back slowly to take the strain and balance the circle.
- When everyone is in balance and harmony, the feeling is of mutual group support.
- Counting can help provide a challenge – for example ‘can everyone hold each other up for a count of 50?’ and improve concentration.
- Note who finds this easy/ difficult, or who cannot lean back with confidence. Discuss this with the individual and look to the group to offer peer support.

Repeating the activity over a number of sessions can help you to review how the group cohesion is improving, and how individual children’s confidence with their peers may be growing.

Meet a Tree (source: Joseph Cornell)

This is a great sensory activity, using the sense of touch, to explore the trees in your Forest School site. It is also an extremely valuable way to develop co-operation, trust and care for each other. Language skills are also supported when descriptive words are encouraged.

You will need: enough blindfolds for half your group. Ribbons may be useful if you wish to pre-select your trees. Otherwise leave step 1 out.

- 1 Prepare for the activity by marking double the number of trees to children in your group using ribbons – choosing a variety of tree types, sizes and shapes if possible.
- 2 Pair up the children and instruct them how to lead each other safely if one of them is blindfolded. Point out any potential hazards for the blindfold person – uneven ground, tree roots, twigs at eye height etc – and demonstrate how to guide someone carefully (no pulling or pushing).
- 3 Tell them they are going to get to know their own tree in the wood – they should feel its bark, the shape of its leaves, anything growing at the bottom, where the branches start and how many there are, what it smells like, how wide its trunk is.



- 4 One child in the pair then leads the other blindfolded to a marked tree or a tree of their choice, and then their blindfolded partner has a few minutes to get to know the tree.
- 5 The children return to their starting point still wearing their blindfolds and being led carefully.
- 6 Only then can they remove their blindfolds – they then can have three guesses to identify their tree. Encourage them to feel, look and remember carefully.
- 7 The pair can then swap roles and repeat the activity.

Meet a tree:

Aims: to promote understanding of trees using sensory learning, care for each other – cognitive learning & interpersonal skills

This activity develops an understanding of the sensory qualities of the tree and helps the child develop an emotional connection with the woodland environment. For a description of the activity see 'Building confidence, establishing trust & supporting emotions' activity section.

This can be followed up by identification using The Woodland Trust's Nature Detectives 'discover and investigate' keys. More detailed species information on individual sheets that can be downloaded from the Nature Detectives website along with other teaching resources for indoor and classroom use, and can help to support ICT in the classroom.

The Field Study Council also provides useful laminated natural history keys, and similar simple child friendly keys are available from Gatekeeper Educational Ltd www.gatekeeperel.co.uk.



Clay Creatures

This activity is quite calming and contemplative, and would be an excellent one to follow an active exploratory activity like a minibeast hunt.

“One of my favourite activities is mud monsters - similar to clay creatures in the Welsh pack and useful for the Scottish climate! Children make mud faces on trees like gargoyles and use natural objects for ears, limbs etc. This activity can be extended by using the monsters when talking about feelings - e.g. they use them in evaluations by changing the facial expressions to happy, sad, angry etc.... (this is) also used in treasure hunt where they had to place an object they found into the monster's mouth “

Wendy Gray, Central Scotland Education Officer, Forestry Commission Scotland



Requirements

Fairly large pieces of clay for each child (needs to be fairly easy to knead and mould – play dough or bread dough might be easier for younger children). Bag for each child to collect natural materials. Hand washing facilities!

Time required

1 hour (depending on length of walk) including gathering materials, making model and looking at the finished creatures. Extension activities like Story telling could make this longer.

The activity

Introduce the activity by talking about and searching for the variety of minibeasts found in the woods. It could be linked to teaching about habitats.

Explain that they are going to make models of giant minbeasts. They can choose to make minibeasts like those they have just found - or perhaps to imagining an extinct giant minibeast that might have lived in the woods along time ago. Imagine a minibeast Jurassic Park!

If the children are familiar with their site let them explore it, and gather natural materials that could be used with the clay to make their creature. Give them some examples of the sort of materials that could be useful such as nuts for eyes, moss for hair and encourage them to dig in the leaf litter to find suitable materials.

Encourage them to find a suitable location where they can settle their model as it is made – on a tree branch, in a hollow, on a stone so that the others can find them. Each child can make their own model or they may prefer to work in small groups. They could make different stages in the life cycle of one creature or a whole family of them.

Then walk through the woods together spotting all the strange creatures. Are they camouflaged? Encourage each child to tell something of their creature's story - its name, where it comes from etc.

Variations

They may enjoy making 'mini-shelters' for their minibeasts using natural materials found close by. Discuss what minibeasts might need to survive in the woodland, by day and night.

You can also make models with bread dough but you need fairly stiff dough with oil added to make it pliable enough. Why not make extra on a day when bread sticks are being cooked? The models will then be eaten by animals rather than being left to litter the woodland when they disintegrate.

An alternative to making the giant minibeasts is to make goblins using a stick for the body and making the head from clay or dough which is then decorated with natural materials to make features, hair etc. They look very effective hung in the trees.

Simple but striking 'Tree spirits' can be made from clay. Mould the clay into a flat face shape in the palm of the hand and gouge out the features with twigs or fingers to make simple faces that can be stuck onto the trees.

"One session that went well and carried through to class work was puppetry. We made heads in the class with self-hardening clay a week beforehand and used lots of drama to get an idea of movement and feelings. The puppets were mostly of animals and we used willow for bodies and scraps of cloth. (It was) easy enough for everyone and they loved it. We then wrote little haiku type plays using no sound just mime, incorporating ourselves as the puppets which the children then wrote down with dialogue this time to be turned into a play for their puppets. We did this in groups of 4 or 5."

*Karin Chipulina Forest School Leader– reporting on a few successful days with East Saltoun Primary p5/6/7
(First pilot in East Lothian) – a rural school*

"I made very successful number orienteering cards with numbers from 0 -10 on them. Each card also had a number related activity on the back of it. Cards were placed in the woods, and each had a different pencil attached to it. Children had number orienteering cards to mark when they found each number."

Sheila Cairns, Nursery teacher, Coupar Angus primary school

Developing skills to find your way around your Forest School site and become familiar with it is an important part of your programme. Part of developing this sense of place will be first recognising safe boundaries and agreeing as a group safe and 'no go' areas. It is important to establish these boundaries before more exploratory activities.

'1-2-3 Where are You?' game

Birds and mammal species that live in woodland and other dense habitat with limited visibility tend to use sound to keep in touch with each other.

This game can help establish rules of how to avoid getting lost and how to find each other if groups are separated and cannot see each other.

Divide your groups into small numbers of children with an adult leader each. One group goes off and 'hides' out of sight. To find them, the other group(s) shout "One-Two-Three, Where Are You?" until they hear the reply "One-Two-Three, We're Over Here!" The second group moves towards the area they hear the reply from, repeats the call and is answered, until the groups are reunited.

Repeat this game to reinforce the rules of keeping in contact with each other within the woodland as appropriate throughout your programme.



Journey Sticks: *promote aesthetic appreciation of woodland biodiversity and fine motor skills – cognitive learning and physical activity*

“It’s amazing to see the variety of objects picked up and more interesting to listen to the explanations of why they choose each particular item”.

Gillian Telfer, Biodiversity Officer for both East & West Dunbartonshire Councils

Journey sticks is a simple activity that can be done using largely natural ‘found’ materials. They are similar to the story sticks made by Native American Indians. While walking through a trail in the forest, the children are asked to pick up natural materials along the path to tie onto their stick. This “journey stick” can serve as a guide for their return trip.

Resources required:

biodegradable twine or wool, scissors/ pen knife to cut twine into lengths, and natural woodland materials. Natural materials like strong grasses or honeysuckle strips could replace the twine.

Activity:

Introduce the activity by looking at a standard map of the woodland or area, or a postcard. These are the usual things that we use to find our way around, or share with others where we have been. However, the wood can tell its own story with the materials it produces....

Ask the children to find a dead stick that appeals to them. As they journey around the wood, they collect objects that have meaning to them – a leaf, piece of moss, a feather for example. These objects are tied onto their stick with the twine.

The completed sticks can be used to share and tell with others about their personal journey, or as a stimulus for an imaginative story, or poetry. They can indicate places in the wood with a particular meaning to the child. They can help remind the children about locations within the wood and test their navigation skills. For example, can each child lead a friend back to where a particular leaf or feather was found? The journey sticks can become a tool to review the children’s feelings and emotions during a circle time review. The journey sticks can be taken home to share with parents and carers to extend the Forest School experience.

The children on one Forest School session wanted to hide their sticks in the wood and see if they could find them on their return the following week. Because of their personal significance, everyone recognised their own journey stick the following session!

Estimating Distances

This activity is good for upper primary and younger secondary pupils. Ask each pupil to pace out 20 metres along a path then mark the spot (ideally with their own crossed marker lashed together that they have made earlier.) Then, as a group, use a tape to measure the distance to find who has estimated most accurately. Repeat with different distances. Children enjoy the challenge of this!

Younger children can be challenged to measure big steps and small steps, or moving in different ways – hopping and striding. They can explore the ideas of scale and units of measurement. For example – how many oak leaves in a line can stretch 50 cm compared to say, willow?

“Scavenger hunt

This activity can be adapted in all sorts of ways to encourage participants to really open their eyes to the variety of colour, texture and form around them. The participants can be ‘scavengers’ or ‘treasure hunters’.

[See Templates for Activities in Appendix 16](#)

[You will need:](#)

a list of things for each individual or group to collect (see example provided). If you are exploring colour (especially during autumn) you could collect items of colours that match paint colour samples strips. Provide something to collect the bits in for each ‘scavenger’ - collection bags/ egg boxes/ mini baskets for example.

- 1** Give a list of ‘treasure’ or scavenging items and collecting bags to a small group of children with an adult helper or to each individual – depending on age and ability.
- 2** Ask them to collect as many items as possible from the list. Remind them not to pick flowers, living plants or bring back living creatures.
- 3** On regrouping, share what each person has discovered. They may want to use their scavenged pieces to make an ephemeral art work or you could use this as a stimulus for story telling or poetry. Otherwise, return the bits to nature.

(Source: adapted from Shropshire Forest School activities)

Sound map

Listen to and record the sounds of nature around you.

This works well with children from 5 years plus.

Props: Index card (see template in pack) & pencil for each person

Adapted from *Sharing Nature with Children II*

See *Templates for Activities* in Appendix 16

Select a site where your group is likely to hear a variety of natural sounds. Each child finds a special listening spot nearby and settles down with their pencils and index cards. Have the children mark an X in the centre of the card. This marks where they're sitting on the sound map. When they hear a sound they should make a mark on the card to symbolize the sound (for example: wavy lines for wind, musical note for a bird, etc.). The mark's location on the map should indicate roughly the direction and distance of the sound. After explaining the sound map activity, have everyone listen for five to 10 minutes. After the time is over, have everyone gather together and share their sound maps.

Variations:

Sounds of the wood

- 1** Ask the children to sit, or lie down on their backs and raise their fists.
- 2** Keep eyes closed. Every time a new bird sound is heard, they should put up a finger.
- 3** Can you count to ten without hearing a bird song?
- 4** Different versions of this game can be played by concentrating on other sounds – for example – leaves in the wind, animals, insects, un-natural sounds like car horns/ aeroplanes.

Try this at different times of day and season, or places within your Forest school site. Where or when is there most/ least bird song?

Bird Calling

Bring birds to you with this simple call.

Ages: 4 years and up Props: None From: Sharing Nature with Children

In an area where you're likely to see or hear birds, try this bird call to see how many and what types of birds you can attract. Wait quietly until you hear birds nearby. Kneel or stand without moving near some shrubs or trees. They will partially hide you and give the birds somewhere to land. The call is a series of repeated "pssh" sounds. Try different rhythms to see what works with different birds. Here are a few to start:

pssh..... pssh..... pssh
pssh..... pssh..... pssh-pssh.....
pssh..... pssh

Each series should be about three seconds. Pause after three or four rounds to listen for incoming birds. Small birds will respond right away or not at all.

Find your flock

This can develop the learning from the earlier 'sound' based activities, once the children's ears are better 'tuned' into the woodland sounds.

You will need: cards with one of the chosen bird names and picture of the bird on it for each child.

If possible, play recordings of songs and calls, or listen and mimic the bird species around you.

Suggested species calls:

Lapwing – 'pee-wit'

Chiffchaff – 'chiff-chaff'

mallard – 'quack'

Cuckoo – 'cuck-oo'

Redwing – 'zeep,zeep'

Chaffinch – 'pink-pink'

Great tit – 'teacher, teacher'

- 1 Show the cards illustrating and naming the chosen species and describe their songs or play a recording of them. See who can imitate these sounds.
- 2 Then give each of the children a card. they must keep the name a secret, but have to find the other children with the same cards by imitating the bird song or call loudly.
- 3 While 'singing' or 'calling', the children can move around until the various flocks come together.
- 4 Discuss why birds have different calls and why they might use them.

Lashings and knots

Learning how to tie simple lashings and knots is an essential skill for shelter building and many other aspects of camp craft.

Some children (and adults) find this quite daunting so don't do too much at once - break it down into individual parts. Keep giving small exercises and activities that involve practice to give them confidence e.g. using square lashing to make a small cross to be used as a marker for games such as estimating distances or using square lashings to make a small weaving frame. Progress onto making camp furniture – tripods for holding a wash bowl, seats etc.



Essential knots

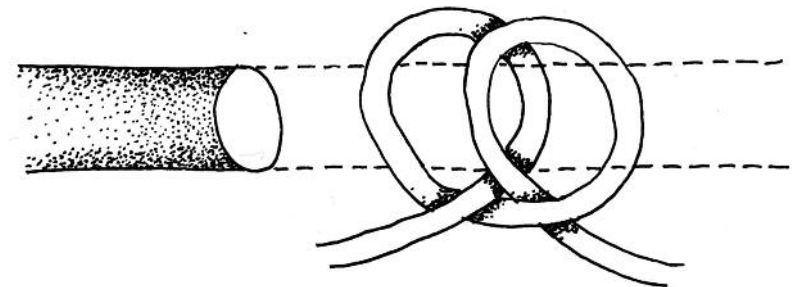
Clove hitch

This is a useful knot for beginning lashings.

You may find it helpful to break it into stages for the children.

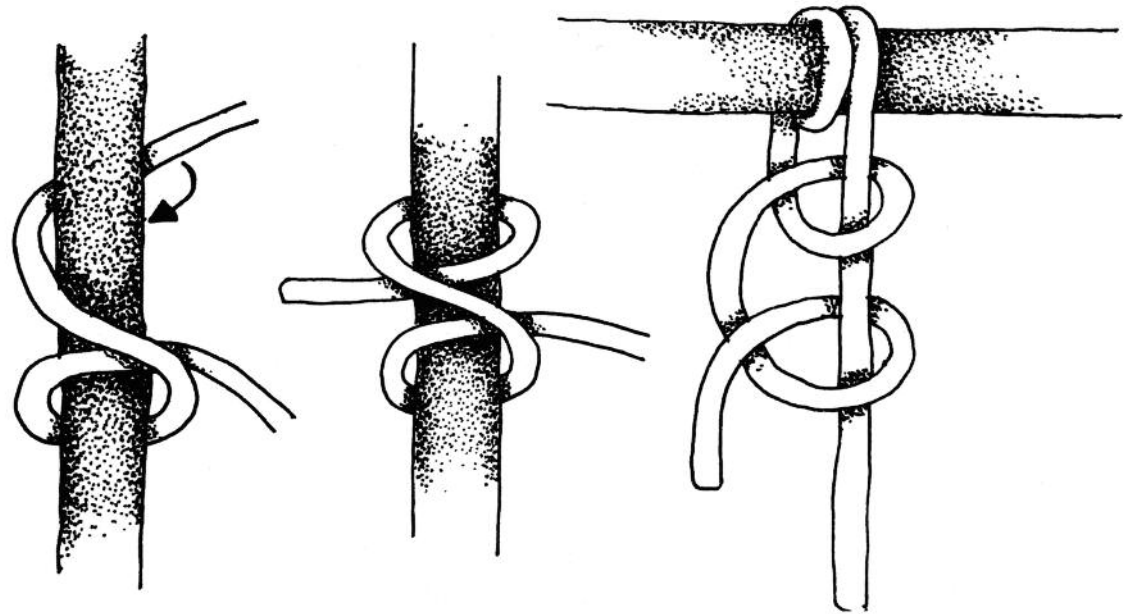
- 1** first make a pair of spectacles
- 2** 'fold' the spectacles by putting one 'eye frame' behind the other
- 3** then slide the double loop onto the stick and tighten – hopefully they've made an effective clove hitch!

Practice undoubtedly makes perfect but they may find the description a handy reminder to start them off.

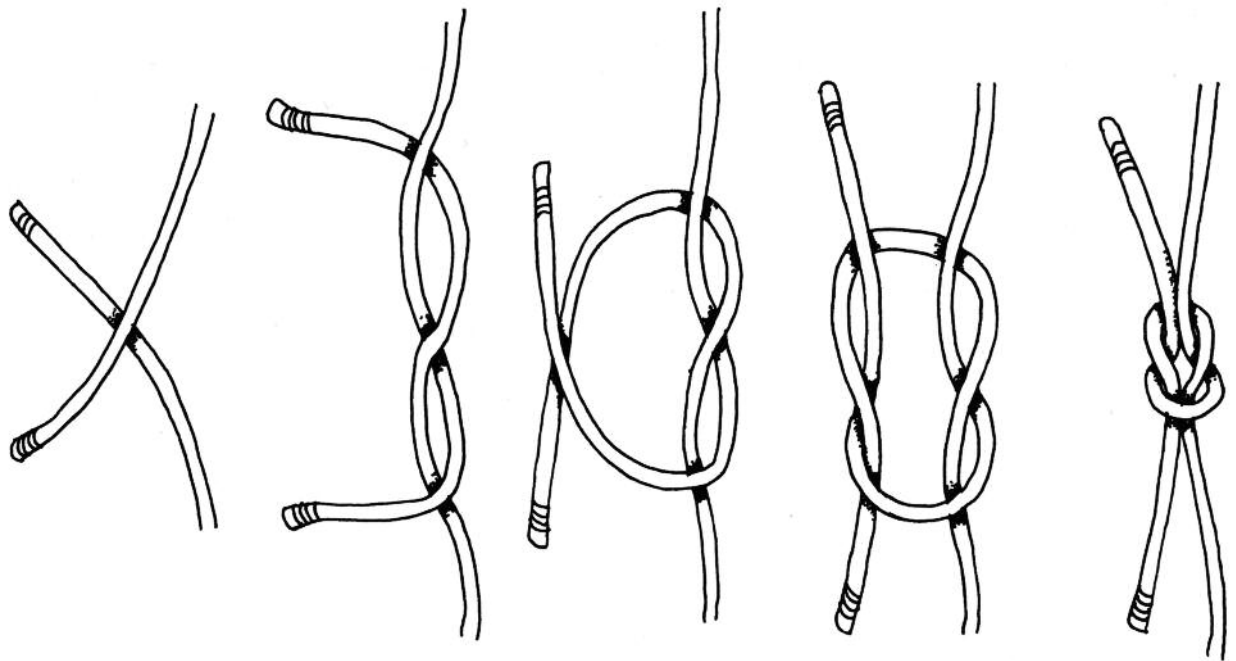


Clove Hitch tied round a post

Round turn and two half hitches (half hitches are useful for finishing off lashings neatly)



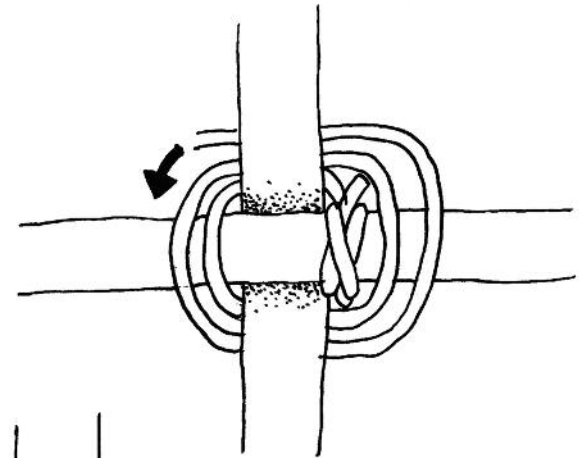
Stages in tying a reef knot



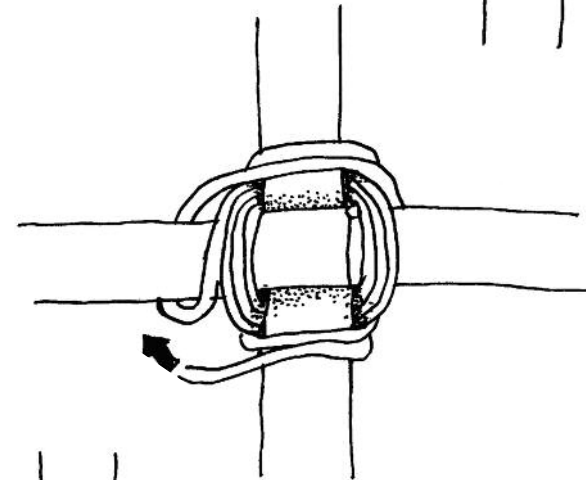
Stages in square lashing

- invaluable for shelter building and making camp equipment

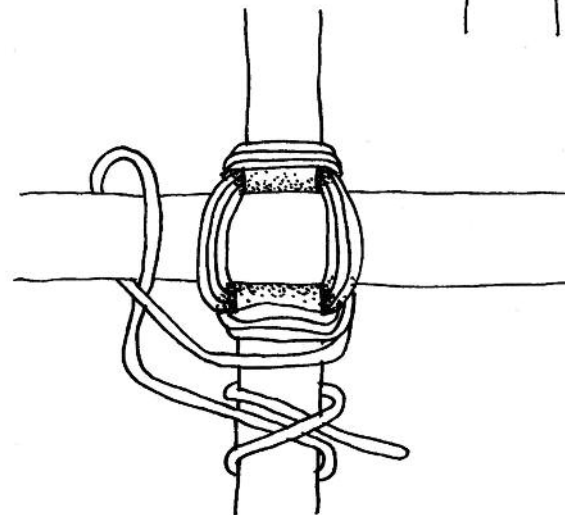
1 Begin with a clove hitch and then lash the string alternately above and below both sticks.



2 Frapping to tighten the lashing.
After 3-4 circuits make a full turn around one stick and circuit the string a couple of times between the two sticks going above different sticks from stage 1.



3 Finish off with a round turn and a clove hitch.



Sawing frame

Select or handsaw 6 poles of wood of equal diameter and length, square lash 3 together to form two tripods. With one tripod at each end, use this to support the length of wood to be cut (here for wood cookies). Note the hand holding the length should usually be behind the tripod top when sawing in case the bow saw slips.

Shelter Building



This is undoubtedly one of the most exciting and satisfying activities in Forest School. It is a pleasure to watch the builders relaxing in their finished shelters – their sense of achievement, ownership and pride is so great.

It can be adapted for all ages – even the youngest children can enjoy gathering ferns or pieces of brash from a felled tree to cover a basic lean-to frame and teenagers and adults will enjoy designing and constructing more elaborate structures. Children of all ages can contribute to discussion about the design of the shelter.

Older pupils can be taught basic lashings and use of tools during the earlier weeks of a programme and this can give them confidence to tackle a larger scale shelter building project. It is best if children work in small groups of 2-4 with an adult leader (1:2 ratio overall). This close supervision has been found to be essential for this sort of project although some teenage groups may need less adult input.

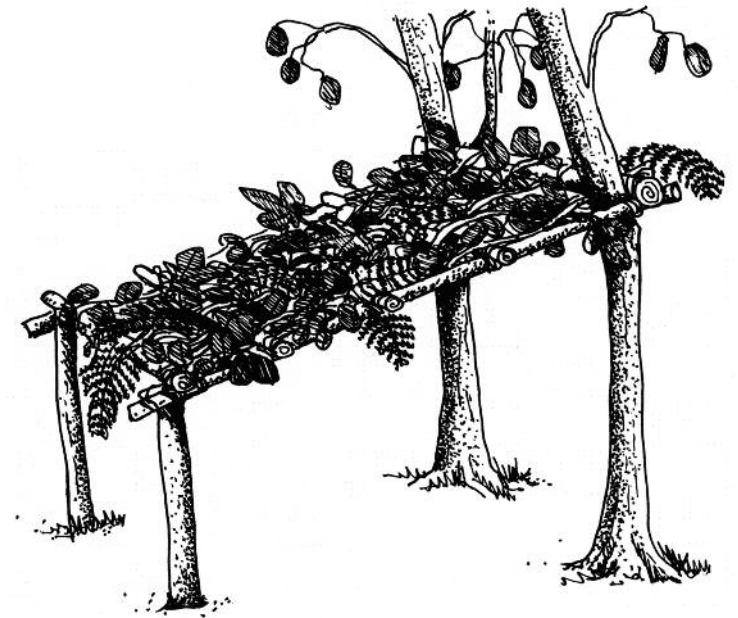
Time needed: ½ day minimum (easily extended to a full day when furnishing the shelter - cutting log rounds, making tables, hooks, tripods etc and just giving them time to enjoy their finished shelter).

Tools: Full tool kit especially bowsaws, loppers, penknives, billhooks. A sledge hammer may be useful for banging posts in (supervise children!) and a spade or pinch bar for digging the holes. Lots of string of varying thicknesses – thick twine for lashing to tree trunks and thinner for lashing smaller sticks (always bring spare balls of string as a huge amount can be used). Try and use natural twine e.g. sisal, rather than nylon as this is harder to tie tightly and doesn't blend in naturally. (If you have several groups working at once, divide string into smaller balls before the session so that each group has balls of varying thickness.)



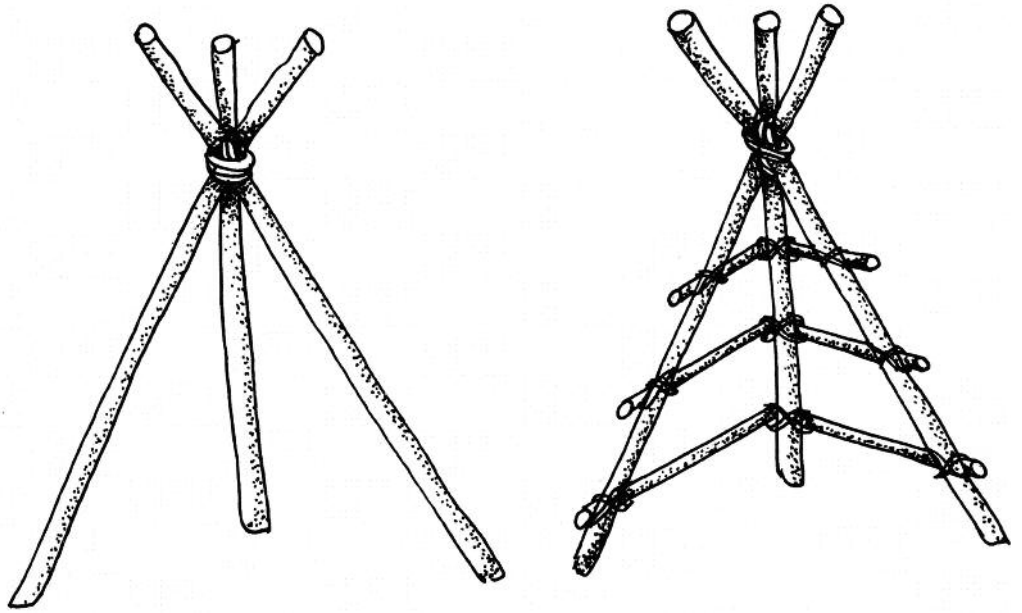
Designing the shelter

- Introductory session with whole group
How did early people make their shelters?
Can we use any of their ideas?
- What materials could be used?
Refer to peoples around the world and how they use the materials around them e.g. mud huts, log cabins, igloos, shanty town residents. Look at what is readily available in the woodland.
- Discuss requirements for their shelter – wind and rainproof, big enough for the whole group to sit or stand in etc.
- Possible designs – showing some laminated copies of finished shelters may help to give them some ideas (see diagrams overleaf or use photographs but encourage their own creativity).
- How will they gather materials? is any felling required? Consider Health and Safety, any ecological impact and ensure adequate supervision.
- Choosing the site
What factors do they need to consider? e.g. slope or level ground, wind direction, proximity to central facilities, ease of access, entry points. Consider safety – avoid overhanging dead branches, nettles, brambles, insect nests etc. Are there any trees or posts that could be used as part of the shelter? (Far less work and more environmentally sound). If not, how are they going to build the frame of the shelter?
- What can they cover the shelter with to make it wind and waterproof?
There may be conifers that can be felled (ideally link with conservation work in the woodland – increasing light to ground layer/ biodiversity etc) if time is limited or the trees are too big for youngsters to tackle, fell some in advance and they all can easily cut and carry branches for use in their shelters.
- How could it be furnished for comfort? – consider seats, tables etc.



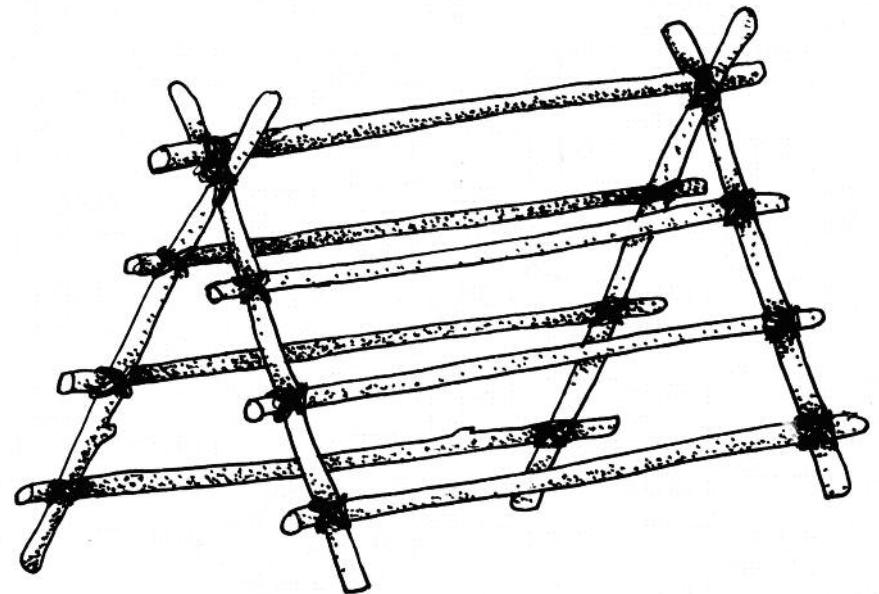
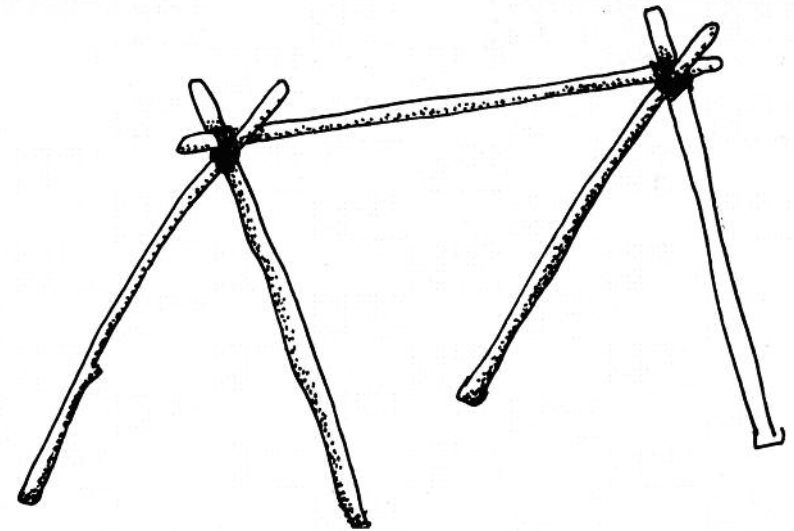
Group building

- Divide the children into small groups and allocate an adult to each group
- Each group selects the site and plans their design in more detail. Encourage the use of existing trees, particularly for primary pupils who may have trouble knocking a post firmly enough into the ground.
- Estimate what length and thickness of wood will be needed.
- Cut materials for frame – work in pairs with adults closely supervising. When lopping and coppicing, demonstrate how to make proper cuts, to limit damage to trees and to work safely.
- Drag cut lengths back to the shelter site.
- Cut frame timbers to length and knock into ground or lash onto existing trees. Encourage teamwork throughout e.g. one holding roof timber in place while other lashes.
- Once frame is assembled, gather smaller pieces of wood to fill walls in and attach by lashing and/or weaving, as appropriate. Alternatively, make separate side panels (see diagrams below).
- Use ferns, smaller sticks, and conifer brash as a final wall or roof covering. Freshly cut pine is great for the inner layer as it smells so good! For larger or longer term shelter use tarpaulin but cover with brash for a natural look. In autumn, leaves could be used as a covering if the shelter is wide angled and low to the ground (they slip off if it's too steeply sided.)

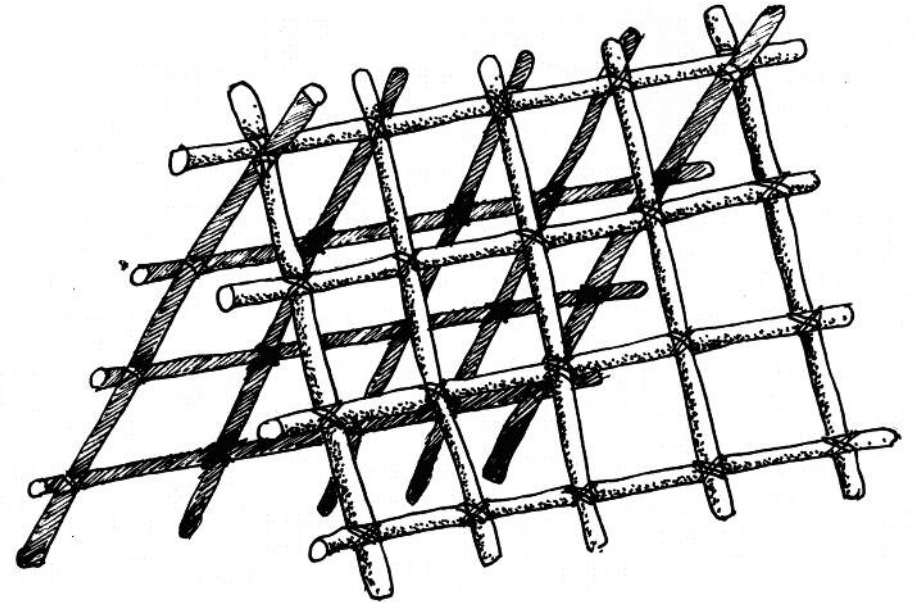


A semi permanent shelter for use with a group in an outdoor area

A suitable sized circle is marked out alongside a hazel with some long flexible stems which help form the framework. Long stems are cut with loppers or handsaws and cleaned with billhooks. These are pushed unto the ground (holes made with a pinch bar), leaving a gap for the doorway facing the fire site for warmth. The tops are tied into the centre from opposite sides using twine. More pliable stems such as willow are woven in as horizontals. Diagonals woven in also help to brace the structure. Finally twiggy leafed branches are laid over the structure in an overlapping style to help shed water and provide shelter from wind. The floor of the shelter can be laid with a groundsheet or tarpaulin.



Completed frame of tent-style



Frame covered with
conifer branches

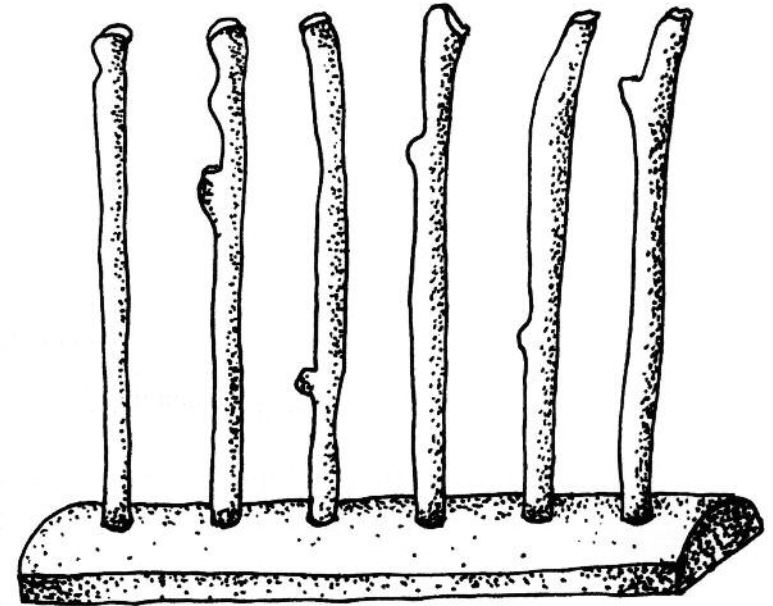


Weaving hurdle fences

This activity can be used in a variety of ways. weaving skills can be practised first with 'natural weaving' described in [Natural Art and Craft activities](#).

If it is just part of a session e.g. a themed day on the Celts, or done with young children, you can hammer in the uprights in advance and just have the children cutting and weaving the withies.

Older pupils, if time allows, could do the whole process from selecting and cutting all the materials to hammering the stakes and completing the weaving. Ideally position the stakes so the fence performs a useful function such as sheltering a fire, reinforcing a weak shelter wall, fencing off an area etc.



It can also be adapted for a larger number of children. Each child collects a withy and they take turns weaving (one leader supervising the weaving and one supervising the cutting of withies). As they wait to gather withies and weave, tell anecdotes about Celtic life. Children find it satisfying to watch their fence grow in size.

Background information

Celtic roundhouses were built from local materials. wooden hurdles were usually the base for the houses, except where stone was plentiful.

Tools required:

Bowsaws, loppers, secateurs, mallets or sledgehammer (depending on thickness of stakes). may need billhooks and penknives if sharpening stakes.

Activity instructions

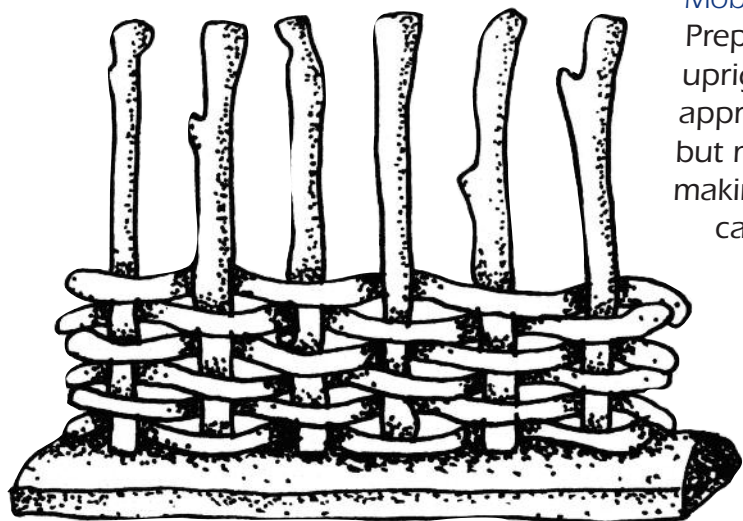
Cut stout stakes as uprights – approximately 4-6 cm in diameter and approximately 1 meter length, depending on the final height required. You can make a temporary hurdle with thinner uprights – depending upon the purpose of your shelter.

Hammer sticks into ground approximately 15 – 20 cm apart. The children could sharpen sticks with billhook and penknife if time allows).

Cut plenty of whippy thin hazel, ash, willow or dogwood withies (as long as possible).

Weave the pliable withies in between the posts. After weaving each piece in, bash it down with a heavy stick so there are few gaps and the fence is relatively windproof.

Variations



Mobile hurdles

Prepare bases for the hurdles using half round posts or flat blocks of wood. Drill holes for the uprights into the supports at 15-20cm intervals along the base (you need at least 6 uprights) approx 5cm wide and 2cm deep. Width varies depending on diameter of uprights to be used but make the hole a bit narrower than width of uprights so that they can be jammed in making a tight fit. After weaving and tightly pushing withies together the hurdle can be carefully removed from the base and taken back to school by the children.

Technically the ends of the withies should be bent round the final uprights and woven into the fence so that the finished hurdle is neat and secure.

Mini-hurdles

Much smaller individual hurdles can be made, like the ones sold in garden centres for edge borders. You will need a base approximately 30cm long drilled with 4 holes. Use very thin withies, ideally long enough to wrap them round the end upright and weave back into the mini-hurdle so that no loose ends are left. When the hurdle is complete you should be able to gently pull the uprights out of the base so that the child can take the mini-hurdle home with them.

Daub

Traditionally the woven fences, known as wattle, were given extra protection against the elements by painting them with daub, a mixture of clay, straw, horse hair and animal dung. An optional addition to the hurdle making is to mix and coat your hurdle with daub. Young children love mixing daub and are predictably fascinated by the inclusion of animal dung.

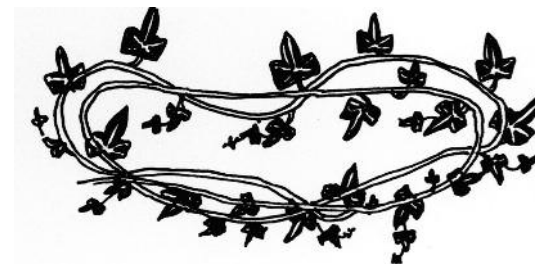
If you are going to let the children handle the daub just use a mixture of clay/mud, water and straw (and hair from a local hairdressers if wanted!). it needs to be of a fairly firm consistency. Most children love grabbing handfuls of daub and pressing into the wattle. Ask them to use their fingertips to smooth it out. This is an extremely messy activity – only do it if you have good washing facilities on site!

Alternatively just demonstrate it but involve the children in the mixing and addition of ingredients. primary groups will still enjoy this if the recipe is presented with humour! Be dramatic – producing sheep droppings, or whatever you wish to mimic it, as the 'secret ingredient'!. Mix with a large stick and either demonstrate the daub application yourself or get a volunteer to apply some with a stick and then smooth it yourself. Be aware of health and safety!



Green Crowns

This is ideal for early years and primary pupils. Older children may be a bit self conscious but could enjoy this activity towards the end of a session when they are more relaxed and having fun. It could become a natural 'fashion' show instead! This can be a good celebratory activity and something to share with parents and family at the end of a session.



If the weather forces an indoor option, this is a good activity if you collect your materials beforehand.



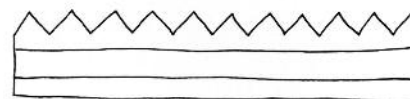
Equipment: Secateurs for leader, plus lengths of ivy, and other plants for decoration such as ferns, grasses and leaves. Only do this activity where the plants gathered are plentiful, and collect small samples lightly over a wide area. Do not pull whole plants up by the roots, or flowers. Talk about the

wildlife benefit of the species gathered. For example, ivy provides shelter and food for many insects (with its early flowers), and berries for small mammals and birds, so it is important not to pull large amounts of ivy from any one tree.



A simple ivy circlet is woven and the decorated with additional ferns, grasses and seed heads. This activity can be linked with stories of early people and how they used natural materials to adorn themselves.

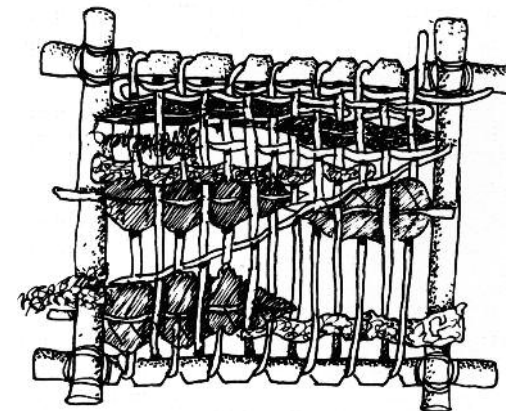
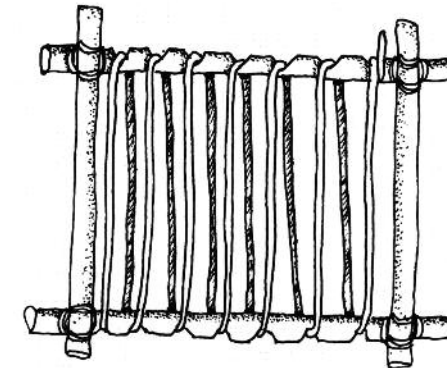
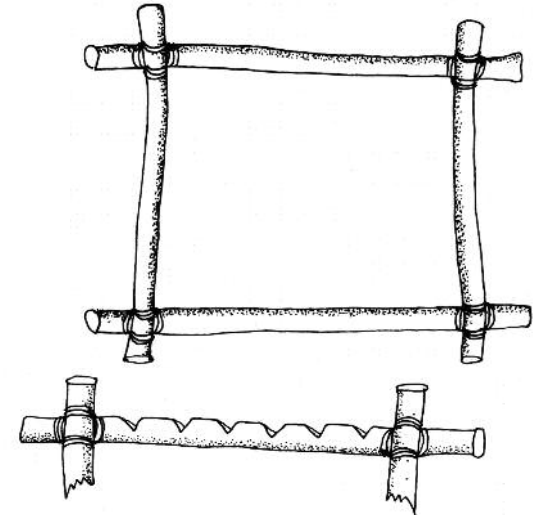
Alternatively, provide pre-cut cardboard crowns or circlets and double sided sellotape can be used. Take care that hair doesn't get stuck to the tape! Children or leaders make these and fit them to their head. The children can then collect seeds, grasses and leaves and stick them onto their crown.



Natural weaving

A useful activity for practising square lashing.

- 1 Make a small frame by square lashing 4 sticks together, each about 25-30cm long to make a rectangular or square frame.
- 2 Cut notches along the top and bottom of frame to hold string in place.
- 3 Thread frame with string.
- 4 Weave natural materials – grasses, thin flexible twigs, chinks of twisted sheep's wool through the string.
Once it has some substance tie in other natural materials – seeds, cones etc.
- 5 You can also use it to make natural picture frames in step 1. Each child can then create their own miniature landscape painting by framing mosses on the ground, textured bark, a view of the sky through branches etc.



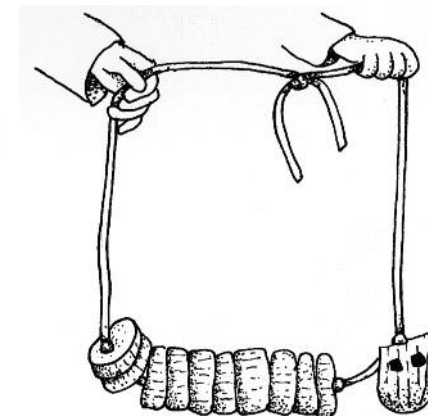
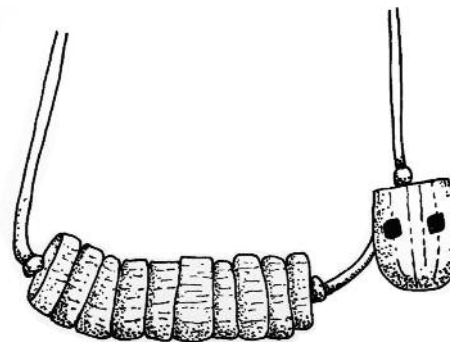


Dreamcatchers: see Drummond Community High School Forest School sessions in this pack

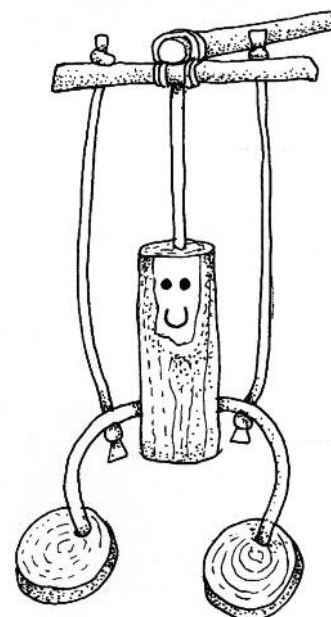
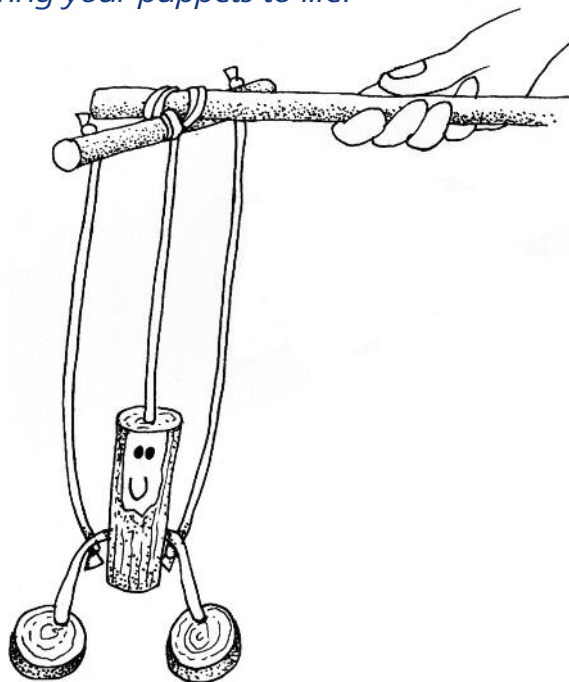
Puppet- making

String discs of wood together with a larger piece of wood for the head. Use knots or beads to separate 'body parts'.

Clever hands can bring your puppets to life.



Simple string puppets



Elder jewellery

Short lengths of elder are ideal for jewellery making as the central pith is easily removed with a skewer or tent peg. Children can peel off the bark (use pen knives for older children, potato peelers for younger ones), then thread and decorate them.

Natural portraits

Natural materials don't inhibit those children who would otherwise protest 'but I can't draw!'

- Gather the group together. Discuss what portraits are, and then say that they are going to make self portraits – but the only problem is – you have forgotten pens, paper and paintbrushes. What can you do? The children will probably leap to suggest they can use the natural materials around them!
- Let the children decide if they want to design individually or in twos or small groups. This will vary with age and confidence.
- Talk about the features of a face they may need to include – ears, eyes, nose, hair etc and encourage or suggest some useful materials like fluffy seeds for eyebrows for example.
- Set some environmentally aware ground rules in terms of parts of plants to collect/ leave alone. Otherwise agree only to collect plentiful loose materials such as fallen leaves/grasses.
- Talk about framing their portraits – what could they use? Sticks or twigs for example, of equal lengths.
- Discuss contrasting backgrounds – so the image is clear rather than blending in with the background – and how they may chose the backdrop to display the image.
- Let them spend time gathering materials and making self portraits. Are the faces happy or sad?
- Alternatively, they could design portraits of other beings – monsters/ wood spirits – let them decide the theme.

"Another good rainy / cold day activity is emergency shelter stories. Pupils sit in emergency shelter and either listen to a story or make up one of their own using a talking stick. This works well if pupils add in their own sound effects. Extension activities can then lead on from the story topic."

Wendy Gray, Central Scotland Education Officer, Forestry Commission Scotland

Telling your own stories can be an exciting journey for the imagination, fired by new discoveries, feelings, smells, sound and textures. The Journey Stick activity described in Establishing Boundaries & Exploring activity section can be a source of new stories. You can make a collective group story, or individuals can weave their own tales. A number of ideas and activities using words and story telling are described by Ewan Hardie in the Drummond Community High School Forest School Pilot Project Programme sessions shown earlier in this pack - see 'Session 5 story telling'.

SNH/RSPB Second Nature publication shows how you can use storytelling to describe the changes that woodland has undergone in the last few thousand years, understand how people used woodlands for their livelihoods and survival, understand the timber value of Scotland's trees and the need to care and protect Scotland's woodlands. Activities 15 – 20 would be good to use and provide short stories and associated questions:

- The Hunter-gatherers story
- The Iron-age Farmers story
- The Boat Builders story
- The Charcoal Burners Story
- The Tanners Story
- The Rangers story

One of these is included here:

The Farmer's Story

I've just walked through the forest from the head of the glen where we have our farm. I love to watch the leaves dance in the tree tops and to look for the shape and patterns made by the branches. What a wonderful place the forest is! My father told me that the trees once covered the land as far as the eye could see. Much of this has been cleared away to make room for our farms and to provide pasture for our sheep and cattle. Clearing the trees is very hard work. Every day I help my father cut timber which we burn on our fires and use to build houses. We also use the wood to make charcoal which is essential when we are extracting metals such as iron. Many of our tools are made from iron and with the threat of other tribes invading, it's vital that we are able to make good weapons.

Recently I've noticed that there are very few young trees close to the farms because the animals stray into the forests and eat the shoots. There have been other changes too. We seem to see fewer of the larger forest animals such as wolves and bear. No-one else seems to be concerned. In fact many people have said they would be glad never to see a wolf again. I don't know why because every time I've seen one it runs away in fear. I'm worried about our forest because when old trees die there will be nothing left to replace them. They say that the forest is so big that there will always be enough for everyone, but I'm not so sure.

SNH/RSPB Second Nature

Adapt your stories to fit your situation. Can the children devise their own story and describe what the woodland means to them?

Biodiversity Stories contains a growing collection of stories about Scottish nature and the way people see it. Searches can be made for different kinds of stories under species, habitats or story type (cultural/ ecological/ economic). Some stories are supported by audio files. See <http://www.biodiversitystories.co.uk/>

Here is one example...

Denizens of the oak A forest of oak, or indeed an individual oak, is host to an unsurpassed array of plants and creatures. Among its companion plants are, largest in size, hazel trees and, smallest, a great many forms of lichen. In fact lichens (there are several hundred types) favour oaks above any other tree. The bark of mature oak is often completely obscured by lichen. It is as much the texture of the bark and its water-retaining qualities that the lichens favour as the tree's particular nutritional benefits. Thus lichen growth does not harm the host tree and as part of the whole forest it is actually of benefit to the trees. Lichen, alive or dead, provides nutrition for many of the inhabitants of the forest, from deer to beetles, from lowly plants such as fungi and mosses to the trees themselves. As a link between all the life-forms, plant and animal, great and small, there are all the insects and spiders that pervade this environment. They are incredibly numerous and varied, sustained by all parts of the oak - bark, wood, buds, leaves, flowers and acorns. For instance, there are gall wasps that rely upon the twigs, drawing upon the matter of the tree fibre and sap to make the galls that sustain and protect their larvae. One type of gall wasp is the maker of the familiar oak apple. Many other flying insects feed upon the twigs and leaves and flowers of the tree, some of which, like the gall wasp, also lay their eggs on the oak. Its popularity with insects does not go unnoticed by spiders and oaks are often covered with webs. Most of the insects and spiders and the like contribute to the food supply of birds and small mammals. Oak woods are the favourite habitat of bats, and jays and woodcocks nest there. Then there are mice and badgers, feeding on the acorns as well as the insects. And of course squirrels. Centuries ago wild boar lived among the oaks, eating the acorns and, until quite recently, domestic pigs were let loose among them.

Reference: Warriors and guardians. Native Highland trees. Hugh Fife. Argyll Publishing, Glendaruel. 1994

...and another.

Frog forecasting If frogs spawn on the edges of ponds and in ditches that usually dry up in summer, it is looked upon as the harbinger of a wet summer. On the other hand if the spawn is all in the deepest parts of the pond, there is to be strong drought in summer.

Reference: Notes on the folk-lore of the north-east of Scotland. Walter Gregor. Folk-lore Society, London. 1881.

Why not collect other old wives tales and riddles about the sort of wildlife you encounter, or make up your own? When working with early years children, Mindstretchers consultancy have produced a series of books one each for spring, summer, autumn and winter called 'Look, Look, Look Again.' Each book is designed so that children and adults can share ideas together in an interactive way and looks at outdoor opportunities in each season.

<http://www.mindstretchers.co.uk/cat/MP.html>

The Woodland Trust provides free downloadable tree stories to use - 'The Dancing Silver Birch' (German) and The Trembling Poplar (Greek):

http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/ED657412-9B92-4615-9A1C-768C4BDC6270/0/worksheet_trees_uncovered.pdf

Suggested woodland story books

Harry's Hazelnut by Ruth Parsons

Explains the life-cycle, uses and wildlife of Hazel.

Sally Willow by Ruth Parsons

Explains the life-cycle, properties and process of using of basket willow.

Maurice Mouse's New Home by Ruth Parsons

Looks at habitats and requirements for life and encourages woodland exploration.

Oliver Finds his Way by Phyllis Root

A lovely woodland journey by a lost bear.

Itchy Bear by Neil Griffiths

Exploring a wood.

Source: Woodland Learning <http://www.woodland-learning.co.uk/storytelling.htm>

The sensory nature of Forest School where new discoveries are made can be a powerful way to stimulate listening, language, and expression. The following poem was used in the pilot Forest School sessions by Drummond Community High School in the following way:

Gather again around the fire circle and use the first part of 'one, apple, dog' so that everyone has a number (see **Campfire games** section). Everyone should have a copy of the poem to look over. There are 12, 2 line stanzas, so every group member needs to read one. The group leader reads number 11 and everyone reads the final lines. It is worth emphasising the fact that the stories and poems we have heard have a real, practical value in terms of survival in the woods.

Firewood Poem

Beechwood fires are bright and clear
If the logs are kept a year

Chestnut only good they say
If for long it's laid away

Make a fire of elder tree
Death within your house will be

But ash new or ash old
Is fit for a Queen with a crown of gold

Birch and Fir logs burn too fast
Blaze up bright and do not last

It is by the Irish said
Hawthorn bakes the sweetest bread

Elmwood burns like churchyard mould
Even the very flames are cold

But ash green or ash brown
Is fit for a Queen with a golden crown

Poplar gives a bitter smoke
Fills your eyes and makes you choke

Apple wood will scent your room
With an incense-like perfume

Oaken logs, if dry and old
Keep away the winters cold

But ash wet or ash dry
A king shall warm his slippers by.

Anon

Making Music

Listen to the sounds around you. SNH/RSPB Second Nature publication has a section on trees and music. The following experiences create their own sound:

- A wood in spring
- leaves falling
- wind in the trees
- the felling of a tree

What sounds do you hear? Link an exploration of music with the Listening activities described in the Environmental games and activities section.

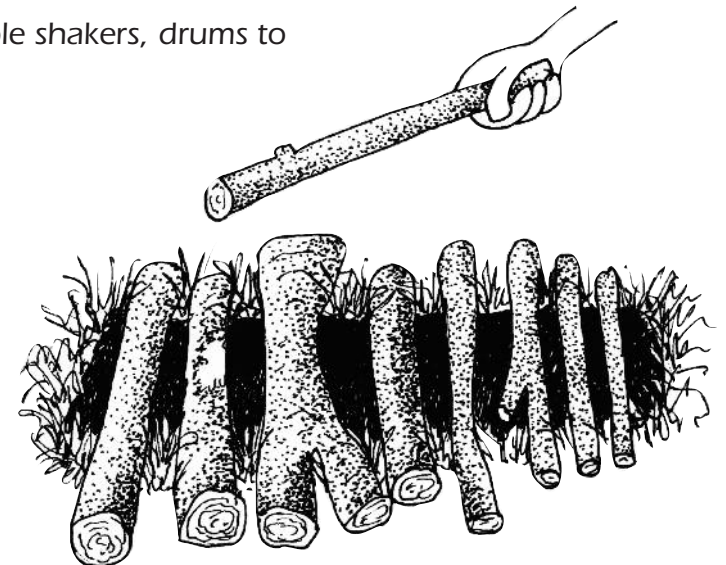
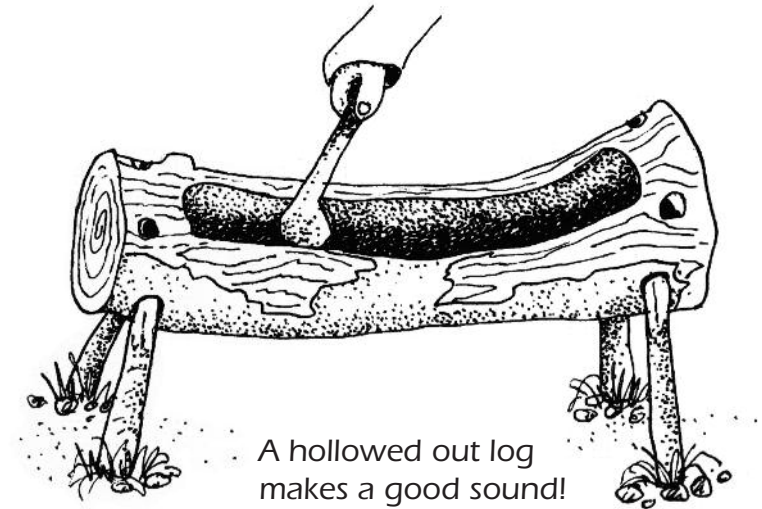
Most children love making music whether just chanting and banging rhythms or making more elaborate instruments. Combine this with puppet and model making to bring your woodland plays and stories to life. See *Gordon MacLellan's books for more ideas.*

The woodland gives endless opportunities for making music from simple shakers, drums to xylophones of varying complexity.

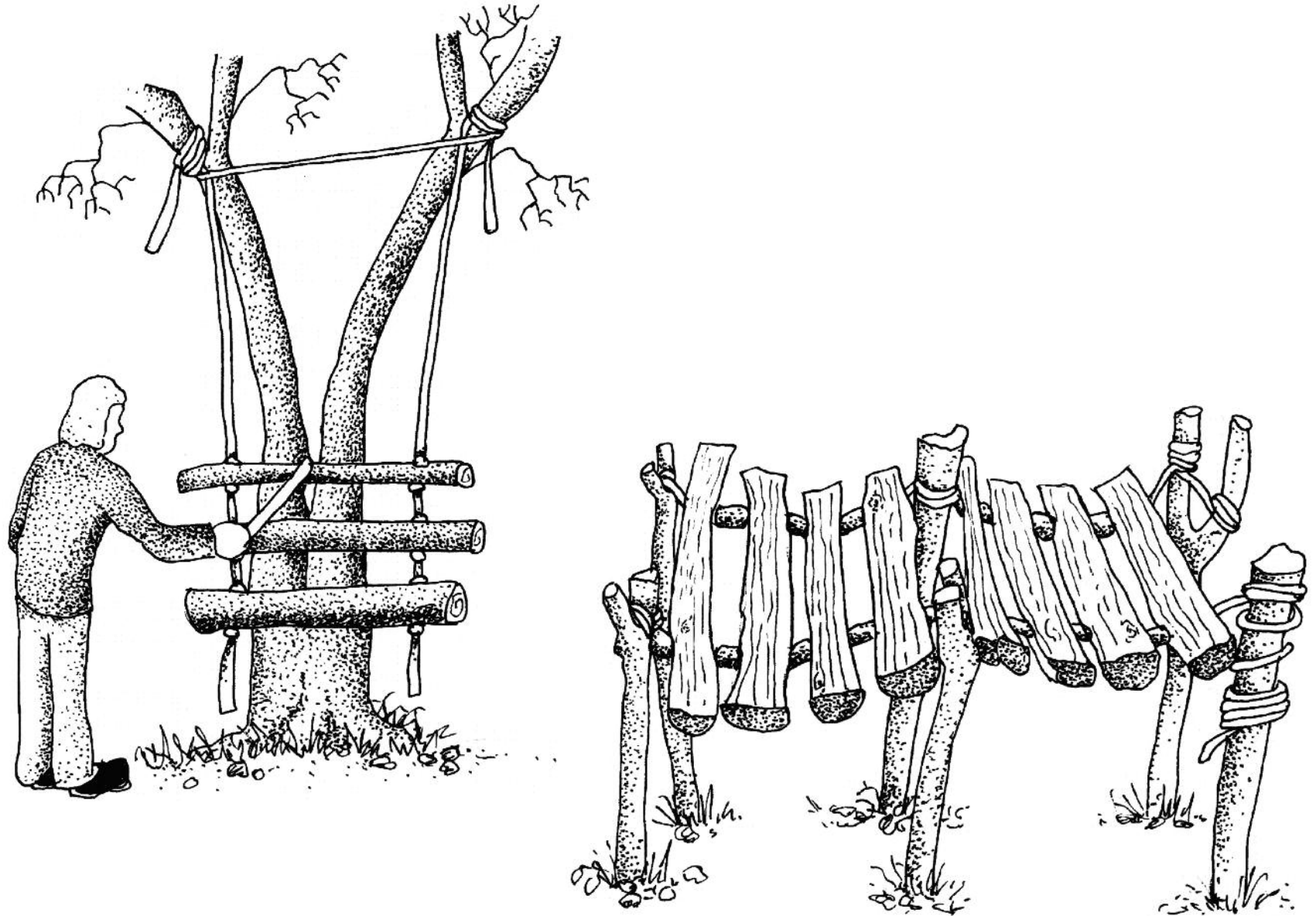
Xylophones

The simplest xylophone can be made by digging a shallow trench and placing logs of different thickness across the hole.

Children can experiment with tones. Different woods make different sounds when hit with the same beater; different beaters make different noises; different thicknesses of wood resonate differently; the depth of trench may also vary the sound.



More elaborate xylophones can be strung together and suspended from uprights or trees.





The Forest School leader(s) must ensure that all tools are returned to store and the work areas are left clean and tidy.

Activity: **Safe Use of Tools Check Sheets**

For pupils at the appropriate stage the tool use activity can be used and written up as an assessment and added to their Record of Achievement. The types of questions asked are as follows: -

Safe use of Bowsaws

Points to remember (aim for 7 of these points to pass)

- Bow saws are used to cut lengths of wood in two.
- There are 3 different sizes and hedging saws.
- Select the saw according to the size of wood to be cut.
- Hedging saws are useful in tight spaces!
- Sharp serrated edge can cause lacerations.
- Always put protective guard on when not in use.
- Use an upright position.
- Make a small nick in the wood first.
- Use the full length of the saw.
- Keep it straight!
- Always return to the tool store when not in use.
- Look up, down and all around before starting to use.
- What are the consequences of your actions?
- What will the wood be used for?



Safe Use of Penknives

Points to remember (aim for 5 of these points to pass)

- Penknives are used for whittling, carving and cutting
- Always keep the knife closed when not in use
- Whittle away from you



- What might happen if you slip?
- Always return to the tool store when not in use
- Look up, down and all around before starting to use.
- What are the consequences of your actions?



Safe use of Billhook

Points to remember (aim for 5 of these points to pass)

- Billhooks are used for taking the side branches off lengths of wood
- Always work with the edge away from you
- Never throw a billhook or use it to hack wood
- Keep the billhook as parallel and close to the wood as possible
- Always return to the tool store when not in use
- Look up, down and all around before starting to use.
- What are the consequences of your actions?

Safe use of Loppers

Points to remember (aim for 5 of these points to pass)

- Billhooks are used to cut small branches
- Is the branch smaller than your thumb?
- Always keep closed after cut has finished
- Use the telescopic handles
- Always return to the tool store when not in use
- Look up, down and all around before starting to use.
- What are the consequences of your actions?



Safe Fire Craft

Points to remember (aim for 7 of these points to pass)

- Fire needs oxygen, fuel and ignition
- Always keep at least 2 feet away from the fire
- Don't lean over fire
- Always strike matches away from you
- Sit/squat with back to wind when lighting the fire
- Move away from the smoke, do not inhale, if the wind moves, you move
- Make sure there is enough fuel before you light it
- Don't stamp on the fire
- Fleece and plastic clothes cause dreadful burns because they stick to you. Wear natural fibres such as wool and cotton.
- Fire is a great servant but a bad master
- Always put out a fire thoroughly with water before leaving a site
- Don't light a fire in very dry conditions
- What are the consequences of your actions?

See Activity: Name necklaces/ 'wood cookies' in Icebreaking activities

(Source: Shropshire Forest School creative activities)



Adult leaders should discuss with the children where a safe place would be to set up a fire site. This needs to be sited where:

- There were no overhanging branches
- Not by a tree trunk or lying dead wood
- On reasonably level ground
- Space to move safely around it
- Access to water
- No risk to adjacent areas
- Calm conditions

Establishing a fire site with log boundaries

The boundary logs are secure and a minimum distance of 1.5 m from the fire. Boundary seats can also be secured by upright stakes if there is a danger of the logs rolling. Spaces between the logs allow safe access to the fire to avoid trip hazards.

Collecting sticks

This activity is built up progressively over a few sessions for safety reasons; as individual groups are first supported by the leader(s) to build a collective fire; later individuals can construct their own. Peer review can be used to assess each other's fire sites (before lighting one).

Having chosen your site, the first step towards a successful fire is gathering the right fuel. This activity gives young people the opportunity to move away from the group leaders and work independently choosing and sorting their sticks. The children need to understand and remember verbal instructions. The whole process of building and lighting a fire enables children to practice their gross and fine motor skills and provides them with a great sense of achievement. Co-operative behaviour is also developed if children share jobs such as carrying larger logs with care for themselves and each other.



Fire is also a potentially dangerous thing, so to entrust an individual with the responsibility to build and light a fire can be a huge boost to their self esteem. It is important to ensure all the elements are in place to maximise their chances of success.

To begin with, twigs the thickness of a matchstick are used to enable the flame from the tinder (usually newspaper) to grow and establish itself. The next twigs required are pencil thickness, followed by thumb thickness and finally up to wrist thickness depending upon the purpose and size of fire required.

Matchstick thickness: Plenty of extra fine and fine kindling used to establish flame from tinder. Dry and brittle, standing dead holly and pine are good woods to use.

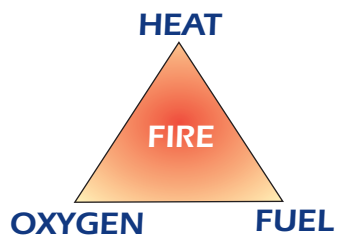
Pencil thickness: Brittle and dry. Good for controlling the heat of a small cooking fire.

Thumb thickness: This is the beginnings of the fire proper

Wrist thickness: Normally the largest fuel required. Anything larger is best left to overnight camps.

Fuel is best collected as standing dead wood or as hanging dead wood (taking adequate safety precautions). Wood found in these ways is best because it has not come into contact with the ground and is more likely to be dry.

It is important to gather all the fuel that you need in enough quantity to create an established fire before you light it. Encourage the children to sort and lay down their wood in different piles sorted according to thickness – at a safe distance (and upwind) from the fire site.



Building fires

For a fire to burn successfully it needs the 'fire triangle' - FUEL, OXYGEN and HEAT. Fire needs to be protected from wind and dampness. To do this you can shield your fire by using your body, or more practically by lighting it within the shelter of a log framed fire pit.

To insulate the fire from the ground, construct a small platform of dry sticks (thumb thick) fitting them together without gaps and build your fire upon this. This platform will provide a good heart of embers as the fire burns.

Next, create a nest of loosely rolled balls of paper or other suitable tinder on top of the platform. On top of this lay a criss-cross pattern of match thin twigs in a waffle pattern, and light the paper. Once the twigs are alight and burning

well, add twigs of pencil thickness and so on with increasing thickness of stick in criss-cross layers. Makes sure it is burning well at each stage before adding more sticks to avoid overloading the fire with fuel as this will smother it. The whole process of the activity could go like this:

- Discuss fire triangle – you could ‘discover’ the elements in a ‘treasure chest’ hidden in wood, or on your treasure tree at the start of your session.
- Practice collecting 3 different thicknesses of wood – match stick (pinkie); thumb; wrist thick.
- Discuss where the driest wood can be found.
- Develop fire site – platform & tinder/ sticks
- Develop skills – breaking sticks, carrying larger logs
- Discuss boundary and distance; make boundary
- Play tree shuffle to show safe movement around fire site
- Light fire
- Demonstrate putting out fire safely and restoring site

Making a Log Screen or Heat reflector

This is suitable for long term or overnight camps.

Stick walls or screens are built by driving uprights into the ground at the appropriate distance apart and piling sticks in between. The uprights can be tied at the top to add firmness to the structure. To make the wall sturdier, the space between the uprights can be increased, and two stacks of wood can be used to surround a central space packed with earth.

This structure can be used to make one side of a shelter, block a shelter’s opening, or to dam a stream. The most frequent purpose may be as a heat reflector behind a fire (as shown in the picture below) where the fire sits between the shelter opening and the heat reflector.

See the **Firewood Poem** in Storytelling and music activities.

Firemaking equipment is available to order from Bevan Design Outdoor Learning:
<http://outdoorlearning.bevandesign.co.uk/fire.html>

These are great activities for reinforcing the health and safety message of how to move safely around a fire –as well as being fun! The safety message is variations on the theme that everyone needs to move around the outside of the fire circle, not across it.

One, Apple, Dog (brain gym)

Begin by gathering in a circle around the newly constructed fire pit. The group leader begins by pointing at a group member and saying the number “one”. Person one then points at somebody else and says the number “two”, before taking a seat. This continues until all group members have a number and everyone is sat down. Repeat until everyone remembers their number. The whole process is repeated using the names of fruit beginning with “apple” and then again with animal names beginning with “dog”. It is important that the order is not the same for numbers, fruit and animal.

Now the fun really starts. The group leader starts off with numbers again but once it is part way round starts the fruit and then animals so that three cycles are happening at once. For all three cycles to go around it is essential that the words are said clearly and eye contact is made so that it is clear who is being spoken to.

The group leader then chooses people to swap seats as quickly as possible (a stopwatch could be used to introduce a little competition) - “Dog swap place with monkey”. It is anticipated that initially pupils will want to move across the fire pit. Although there is no fire burning this is an opportunity to establish rules about how we move around the camp safely. When swapping places pupils will have to step out of the circle and run around the back. This could lead onto a game of tree shuffle/ duck, duck, goose.

Tree Shuffle game

This is a version of Duck, Duck, Goose (see below – used in the Drummond Community High School pilot Forest School sessions), but you could substitute ‘Duck’ and ‘Goose’ for names of trees – for example – ‘Oak, oak, Ash’ to fit the Forest School context.

Duck, Duck, Goose

Duck, Duck Goose: one person walks around the outside of the circle tapping everyone on the head each time saying either “duck” or “goose”; if they say “duck” the person remains seated but if they say “goose” the person has to get up and chase them around the outside of the circle. If the first person makes it around to take the place of the “goose” then the game continues as before. If the “goose” catches them then they have to stand in the centre of the circle until somebody else releases them by completing two circuits without being caught by the “goose”. The number of circuits goes up according to the number of people in the centre.



"campfire cooking...always goes down well with any age group and some teachers tend to worry about health and safety in cooking! ...(try)toasting marshmallows, toast, baked eggs, hot chocolate, chocolate bananas, raisin bread (dampers - Scottish name), vegetable soup etc."

Wendy Gray, Central Scotland Education Officer, Forestry Commission Scotland

There are a number of issues that need to be considered when eating and cooking in a Forest School context. These include:

- ▶ Food health & safety Do we have any guidelines to put in here?
- ▶ Healthy eating
- ▶ Sustainability

Sustainable lunch activity

This activity helps to address issues on food packaging, waste and healthy eating.

You will need 'Sustainable lunch cards' which explain the rationale of this activity. See Appendix Activity templates

If this was carried out over a number of sessions, this would help to evaluate how successfully the participants are putting healthy eating and sustainability into action.

Nettle Soup Recipe *(adapted from Keith Floyd BBC food)*

This activity was used during the Drummond Community High School Forest School Pilot Project (see session plans in this pack)

Preparation time: less than 30 minutes.

Cooking time: 10 – 30 minutes.

Ingredients:

1 onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic
8 large handfuls young nettle tops, chopped
25g/1 oz butter
25g/1 oz flour
1L/2pt good veg stock
salt and pepper
cream (optional)

Method:

- 1** Cook the onion and nettle tops in the butter until soft.
- 2** Add the flour and cook for about 3 minutes, stirring, then add the stock and season well.
- 3** Bring to the boil, and simmer for 5 minutes and then sieve.
- 4** Re-heat, adjust the seasoning and add a little cream if desired.

Some practical approaches for emotional review within the Forest School context are shown below:

- ▶ First provide an opportunity for individuals to exhibit their 'normal' characteristics within an environment where they will not be judged
- ▶ Help the young person to make the link between their feelings and their physical self. For example, if they react to situations they find difficult with anger or other extreme responses, first allow cooling off time, and then ask the following:
 - What behaviour upsets you? e.g. aggressive pointing/ noise/ physical contact
 - What are your worries? e.g. fear of failure
 - What makes you get angry/ sad/ frightened quickly
 - What causes an escalation to result in an angry/ upset response without thinking
 - Look for time out opportunities
 - How do you show you are angry/ sad/ frightened
 - What does it feel like? e.g. head feels tight/ stomach knotted etc

Carry out emotional review at the end of each day – asking what coping strategies were used

- ▶ Techniques such as a feelings tree can be employed. Children who find it difficult to communicate verbally or through writing could select pictures with facial expressions that reflect their feelings.

The **journey sticks** activity (see earlier section) can become a tool to review the children's feeling and emotions during a circle time review.

The **Trust game with rope** (see earlier section) can be a useful one to repeat to review any changes in trust and confidence and how the group is working together.

Chuff line

This activity can help to develop the emotional vocabulary of participants.

It can be done as a regular feature of a session review, or to see how they are feeling at the start of a session. Children are asked to go and stand beside the number which reflects their feelings, in response to a question.

You will need a piece of rope or string running between two trees along which are tied laminated numbers from 1 to 10 at evenly spaced intervals.

Explain to the children that they are going to award themselves a 'mark/score' to each question you are going to ask by going and standing on that number on the line, where the higher the score is, the more positive the response. Illustrate how to do this, taking through your reasoning.

Ask such questions as:

How much did you enjoy...?

How well did you work with other people when...?

How well did you listen to what others had to say when we...?

How happy did you feel when...?

Take time to question individuals about their chosen score. For example:

"why did you choose to stand by number 3 – did you feel unsafe by the fire?"

Checking children's responses to the same or similar questions over a number of sessions can help you as leaders, and the individual participant, see what progress is being made in their confidence, or skills.

(Source: adapted from Forest Schools in Shropshire activities)

Sally Squirrel Circle time (or equivalent animal)

This is a similar reviewing activity to Chuff line but more suitable for an Early Years group.

You will need: Squirrel or another animal glove puppet, story sack containing visual aids

Version 1:

Sally Squirrel asks the children in turn about their experiences using such questions as:

Did anything make you laugh?

Did you feel proud of anything you did today?

Did anybody help you do something today?

Did you feel unhappy about doing anything today?

Did you try something new today?

Have you learned anything new about someone else?

Version 2:

Sally Squirrel provides different sentences for individuals to complete in turn around the circle like:

I liked it when...

I worked with someone else to....

I was helped by....

It was difficult to.....

Nobody listened when....

I've learned that...

I surprised myself when...

I felt unhappy when....

(Source: adapted from Forest Schools in Shropshire activities)

Magic Spots

You will need: something to signal it is time to return – a bird caller, whistle or similar.

- 1 Explain that the children are going to make their way to a special spot in the woodland by themselves to close their eyes, sit down (take a bag or mat to sit on if damp), listen to the sounds of the wood and think about what they have done that day.
- 2 Demonstrate the signal for the return.
- 3 Tell them that they are to take 20 steps to find their magic spot. This will help to keep them reasonably close and can be increased according to your site/ age group, or abandoned later when you are confident the children can do this sensibly.
- 4 All start counting together and moving off to find their place
- 5 Enjoy peace and quiet for a few minutes!

(Source: adapted from Forest Schools in Shropshire activities)

Special place invitation

You will need: template invitations provided – at least one per participant. Pencils.

This activity could follow from **Magic Spots**.

Using the template provided, the participants each find themselves a special place that means something to them. Encourage them to sit and be quiet, and look around, and listen, and discover what its special elements are. They then write their invitation to another person (or could do this back at their setting as an indoors activity). Choosing a special place could be at the end of a Forest School session, with the 'return' visits taking place on the next session, to see if everyone remembers where their special place is. They each take turns to introduce their invited friend to their special place.

In a circle time activity, can they describe what is special about their friend's special place, or their own?

Forest school song

To the tune of 'Here we go round the mulberry bush' sing the chorus 'Here we are at Forest School, Forest School, Forest School, here we are at Forest School on a bright and sunny/ dull and cloudy/ wet and rainy day.'

Get individual children to add a verse beginning 'we have had fun ...' to recap what they have done during the session.

(Source: adapted from Forest Schools in Shropshire activities)