**Getting ready to go to the woods**

**Do the routines below every time you venture out, and encourage participants to lead this element after the first demonstration (these activities below are part of Outcome 2.5)**

The routines below demonstrate how literacy and numeracy can be embedded into the Forest Kindergarten routines and make getting ready to go a fun and interesting experience for the children. Participants should be encouraged to adapt these to their children’s interests and abilities. For example, it simply may not be appropriate for one group to line up. However, others will love and enjoy this routine.

* **Sing a song:**

*We’re all going to the woods today x 3*

*We’re all going there to play*

*Tra-la-la the song and repeat as needed*

This is an aural reminder to the children that something is happening when they hear this song and to get ready to go to the woods.

* **Clothing and backpack check:** This is fun and an essential part of going outdoors. Never rush this and ensure children are fully involved by using *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes* approach. It’s an opportunity to check we are all wearing suitable clothing. Also suggest to participants that they keep spare clothing nearby and can ensure children are adequately dressed. It is just as important in warm, as well as cold weather. At this stage doing a quick weather check using a weather app on an iPad or tablet is helpful and to compare this to what you can see outside.
* **Introduce a friendly soft toy.** This toy should be a native animal that may live in the woods where you are going, e.g. a red fox, owl, badger, etc.This can help some children feel more settled and usually at least one child will happily volunteer to carry the toy. Do not give it a gender. Just call it “badger” or “red fox”, etc. Stories, songs and rhymes can be developed around your animal and the greenspace visits.
* **Human graph line up and head count.** Everyone lines up with a partner. Estimate how many are in the group. Check by doing a head count. The head count is undertaken using 1-to-1 correspondence, i.e. tapping each child and adult as everyone in the group counts. Adults/leaders are always included so that number bonds happen naturally. Adults should model the mathematical language.
* **Magic number:** Have a spare wood cookie/piece of card and felt pen on hand to write or show the number of people in the party.
* **Lead stick:** Explain its purpose, of giving children responsibility of recognising their ability, sense of achievement. The child who carries the lead stick is at the front of the group, leading the way for key parts of the walk to the woods. The stick is one-metre long, to help children develop a sense for this standardised length. The stripes allow for estimating length, width, depth or height of anything requiring to be measured. It also means the stick is less likely to get lost in the woods.

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**Arriving at the woods**

Children find routines reassuring and so build these into the great adventure of going to the woods. Every setting develops its own routines that match their special woods. Below is an example:

We walk the boundary to remind ourselves about the area we are using. Depending on the site this may involve putting up visual markers or playing a game such as “Stop and hop” to help remember where to go (this involves running to the boundary, stopping and hopping).

We meet at the gathering circle and sing the gathering song and do a head check, using the magic number:

*Come on everybody let’s gather round x3*

*We’ve got to make a circle*

*Count, count the magic number x3*

*Is everybody here?*

We **do the daily site check** together

* (Weather check has been done prior to leaving)
* Ground check – we all feel the ground with our hands and walk on the spot with our feet. Is it soft, wet, muddy, icy, dry? What does this mean when we play?
* Vegetation – we look up at the tall trees to see if any are waving gently at us. We wave back and look to see if any of them have changed since we last visited. What about anything else we noticed?
* We look for rubbish and show the litter pickers/gloves and bag for any children who want this job.
* We check if there’s anything we need to remember about keeping ourselves safe, e.g. recap agreed rules: play where you can see an adult, stay in the area, come when you hear the gathering call.

If **dog mess is a problem,** then we do a “crime scene investigates” approach upon arrival. This means linking arms and slowly walking across a patch of ground looking for dog mess or other material. Then put down a tarp for leaving our gear on in the clean patch. Use cones or bright pegs or other system for marking dog mess.

Depending on the group and the woods and what has happened previously, we may play a quick game or sing a song or two that helps us remember what to do and how to be outside.

**The rest of the jobs could be opt-in**. One adult prepares the site with any children who wish to assist whilst the other(s) are supporting the children to settle and play:

* The first aid bag, the resources and hand hygiene kits are put into their regular spot.
* If shelter is needed, such as a tarp, this is put up.
* The toilet area is created.
* Litter picking and anything else that needs doing. Sometimes there are jobs that can be done to help care for the site.