

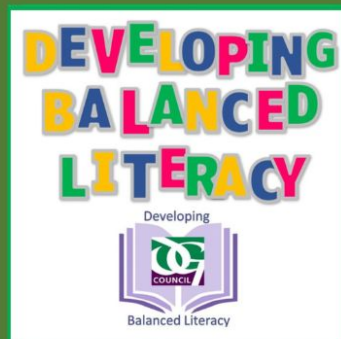


The aim of this booklet is to give you some ideas of activities to do with your child or children that can help to develop their literacy skills

TAKING LITERACY OUTDOORS WITH YOUR CHILD

Activities for Parents/Carers of children in their early years

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It's so beneficial for children (and adults!) to be outdoors - it's good for their mental and physical health and helps them feel relaxed. Getting fresh air and exercise helps them to sleep better at night. It can be an ideal time to integrate some playful learning into your daily routine.

WHAT IS LITERACY?

Most people think of literacy as being about reading and writing, and yet to learn these, we need to learn a lot of other skills such as:

- **Building gross motor skills** (walking, running, climbing, pulling, etc.) that gives the strength and coordination that enables children to develop and control fine motor skills (grasping, squeezing, pinching, threading...) so that they can hold a pencil or paintbrush.
- **Listening** - copying or imitating a sound, locating where a sound came from, discriminating between the important sounds and background noise.
- **Listening to and being able to follow instructions**, retell a sequence of events or listen to a story.
- **Building up vocabulary**, learning different words, and being able to make them into sentences and spoken language.
- **Recognising marks, symbols, shapes**, letters, pictures and learning how to make these ourselves.
- **Talking** - expressing our thoughts and ideas, feelings and emotions.
- **Concentrating** and maintaining attention.



Before you go out - remember to dress up warmly. Waterproof clothing and boots can make all the difference to having fun outdoors.



When you can hear some birds stay still.

LISTEN UP!

Ask 'How many different birds can you hear?' You can then count with your fingers - holding up a finger for each new bird you hear.

You can do this for a certain amount of time such as one minute. Later you can increase the time you can be quiet for - can they be quiet for two minutes? This helps them to focus attention on certain sounds and ignore others.

On a walk ask your child/ren to name any natural objects they see.

WORD BEATS

Say the word together and clap or jump the syllables. For example oak (is one syllable), chest-nut (is two), butt-er- cup (three), tree (one), clov-er (two).

For variations you could challenge children to spot different things (names of people, man-made things etc). Vocabulary: syllable, counting, lots of new nature-based words.



JOURNEY STICK



Take some string or wool out with you.

When you're out and about find a stick, then tie different things to it as you go on your walk (e.g. leaves, grass, pine cones, shells...). At the end of the walk you can take it in turns to tell the story of your walk and what you found along the way.

Vocabulary: there's lots of opportunities to learn new words depending on where you go and what you see.

BEAR HUNT

Read the book 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury to your child/ren.

Your local library will have this book and/or you could watch a performance of it by Michael Rosen on the internet. Go outside and challenge the children to find, or create, the different scenes/habitats - e.g. where's the swishy grass? Where's the cave? Act out the story whilst saying/singing it.

Vocabulary: bear, scared, long, wavy, swishy, over, under, through, splash, splosh, mud, squelch, forest, stumble, trip, snowstorm, swirling, whirling, cave, narrow, gloomy, tiptoe, shiny, goggley.



NEAR & FAR

Ask 'What can you hear far away?'
'What can you hear close by?'

'How many different sounds can you hear?'



Use your 'Deer Ears' (cup your hands around the back and then the front of your ears) to listen for different noises from different directions.

COPY MY LETTER

Make a letter from any natural materials - e.g. sticks, leaves, mud, pine cones, acorns, conkers. Ask the child/ren to copy the letter you made using different materials.



LETTER DANCE

Draw a really big letter in the ground (it could be the first letter of their name).

Walk or dance the letter as if you are a pencil drawing the letter, whilst your child(ren) follows behind. Whilst you are walking/dancing, say the letter over and over. After you have done it for a while, when you repeat, you could also say as many words beginning with that letter as you can, or make up a silly rhyme with words beginning with that letter.



In the garden you can lay a trail to find some treasure or a surprise.

TREASURE TRAIL

Out and about with friends, split into two groups. One group can lay a trail with sticks, shells, stones or leaves in arrow shapes, and then hide at the end, waiting to be found. The other group gives them a short head start and then sets off to find their friends! Vocabulary: left, right, straight ahead.



BERRY NICE

Use squashed berries to draw or paint on skin, cloth, logs etc. You can vary it up and draw or write with mud, charcoal, pressed leaves.

What else could you draw with?

Remember to only pick things which there are lots and lots of.



Pick up any natural object and ask questions about it.

QUESTIONS

They can be silly or sensible, wondering and curious. The trick is never to answer them! e.g. 'Where was this stone made?' You can extend this to asking questions about everything and anything when you are out and about. Find out, look up and investigate things together when you get home.



LET'S PRETEND

Find a natural object, pretend it is a character from a favourite story, for example if you find a stick you could say "I'm Stickman, I'm stickman, I'm stickman that's me, and I want to go home to the family tree".

Or we can pretend to be the Gruffalo, and go for a stroll through the deep dark wood to meet Fox, Owl and Snake.

Or perhaps we can be Nip Nebs and make everything icy.

Collect some stones that you could paint or draw on.

Draw a picture or symbol on each one.

These are your story stones, you can now make up a story that includes the different pictures.

Or put the painted stones in a bag, then pull

them out one at a time, making up a story using the different pictures

on your stones in the order they

appear in. You could make up one

sentence and then the next person says one

sentence, continuing the same story.

Make it funny and giggle together!

STORY STONES



THREE LITTLE PIGS



Use natural materials to build houses for the pigs - grass, sticks and stones. Use words to describe the houses, light, heavy, strong etc. Retell the story of the 3 little pigs and involve the whole family to blow the grass and stick houses down. Go on an adventure to find the wolf.



SMALL WORLDS

Depending where you are, collect clay, mud, twigs, grass, snow or sand to make a character and build a home or a playground for them - let little imaginations run wild! Is it a beastie, a fairy, a dinosaur, a dragon or an alien?

DESCRIBING HUNT

Find a natural object.

Use a word to describe it - e.g. long. What's the opposite? e.g. short. Can you find something that is short? What other word could be used to describe this thing? e.g. thin. Can you find something which is the opposite of thin? (thick) and it goes on...



SCRAPBOOK

Make or find a scrapbook to collect and stick 'treasures' in

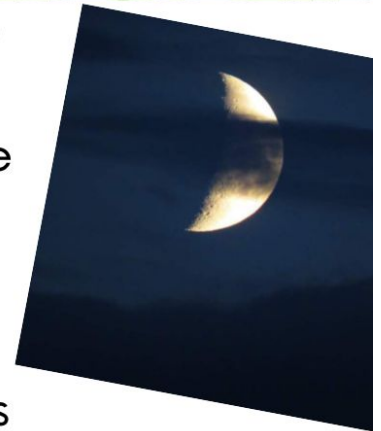
(things that you find on your adventures together); and/or draw/paint pictures of the things that you see when you are out. Use it to talk about and remember the different things you have done.



NIGHT WALK



Go for a walk in the dark (take a torch to be safe). You could sit still with your torch off, and see how your eyes get used to the dark and can see more things. Look at the stars or clouds and see/describe what they look like (e.g. that looks like a bear!). Everything looks, smells and sounds different at night! Sing songs or tell stories together.



GO PLAY!

Play is really important in the early years! It's great for your child to have the space and freedom outdoors to invent, be creative, experiment, explore, investigate, lead, jump, skip, climb, run and use all of their senses. Hands-on learning, using real and natural objects can help your child to engage and make connections, giving them a solid foundation for later, more abstract learning.





Treasure Trail

3 Little Pigs

Scrapbook

EARTH CARE

**Do not pick anything which is alive and growing
- it's important to show children to care for nature.
Don't drop litter, or use litter for these activities.**



**Remember to wash your hands
after these activities**

References

- Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler
- Nip Nebs by Susi Briggs & Ruthie Redden
- Stickman by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen & Helen Oxenbury
- Developing Early Literacy Skills Outdoors by Marianne Sargent (2015)



Find more ideas here:

→ **Libraries are wonderful places to go with your child.**
Let them browse and choose themselves, read together or just look at the pictures and talk about what you see. Find out where your closest one is and what early years sessions they might also have: <https://dumgal.gov.uk>

Outdoor and Woodland Learning (OWL) Scotland:

→ <https://owlsotland.org>

Nature Activity Ideas for All Ages – Sensory Trust:

→ <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk>

Learning through Landscapes outdoor learning ideas

→ <https://ltl.org.uk>

And to help you get out and about with your baby

→ **and toddler:** Dumfries Sling Library | Facebook



Activity ideas also from Elizabeth Tindal and Simon MacRae.

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