



# The Learning Institute

## Taking learning outdoors Part 3: Overcoming barriers

### Overview

The purpose of this CPD relating to outdoor learning is to encourage practitioners to think more deeply about the role outdoor learning might have in the provision of a balanced and broadly based curriculum. It should also provide inspiration for parents, TAs and teachers to use outdoor contexts as part of their everyday teaching by making use of outdoor environments, be it a garden, a school setting or a local open space as a free resource for outdoor learning.

The CPD is suitable for anyone working with - or wanting to work with - young children and/or anyone who simply has an interest in outdoor learning. It has been separated into parts, you can undertake all parts in turn as they can build on each other, or you can just undertake the particular part that is of most interest to you.

Part three of this CPD unit explores the barriers and solutions to learning in the natural environment.

### Target audience

Early years workers, teaching assistants, teachers of EYFS and KS1/KS2 (but don't let this deter you if you teach in KS3 or KS4!)

### Duration

Approximately 1 hour

The Learning Institute provides opportunities for individuals and communities through high quality education, training and research programmes that challenge personal barriers and promote social inclusion. To find out more, please get in touch.

## Introduction

Experiences in the outdoors can be a catalyst for powerful and memorable learning with outdoor learning experiences often remembered for a lifetime (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2006) and yet research has shown that from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 there is a marked decline in opportunities for children to learn outside the classroom (Waite, 2010). Why does this happen?

Part three of this CPD series considers barriers to taking learning outdoors and how these can be overcome.

## Objectives

- To consider the issues underpinning the implementation of learning outside the classroom
- To consider the potential of a setting
- To consider the barriers and solutions to outdoor learning in a setting

## Resources

Pen and paper for note taking

Internet access to following:

- Writing Opportunities - Rainy Weather Ideas with Juliet Robertson [video] available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKhZXNzDaco>

## Task 1: Barriers to outdoor learning

The 2012-2016 Natural Connections Demonstration project, a large-scale study across 125 schools in the south-west of England, confirmed that delivering the curriculum outdoors came with a variety of challenges which could prevent the delivery of regular outdoor learning, especially at upper Key Stage 2.

Common barriers include low teacher confidence through lack of personal experience, lack of resources and funding, safety fears and time within an already busy curriculum to address these challenges. (Waite *et al.*, 2016). Additionally the British weather is frequently cited as a barrier to taking learning outdoors.

In the following video clip, outdoor learning consultant Juliet Roberts explores how barriers to learning outdoors are overcome in Fort William, Scotland.

Watch the Starbuck Education video *Outdoor Learning Tips* available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKhZXNzDaco> (running time 11 mins).

As you watch, make a note of:

- the potential barriers raised by the practitioners
- how these barriers are overcome.

## Task 2: Explore the potential of your setting

In this task you will consider how you could use your own setting to deliver an element of the **maths** curriculum outdoors. (You could choose one of the activities included on your maths mind map from part 2 of this CPD series if this has already been undertaken).

With a little thought, natural resources available in your setting can be used to create memorable, exciting and stimulating lessons outdoors, and they are free (Lambert *et al.*, 2020). For example, plants have many uses - their leaves can be used as 'counters', and their sticks can be transformed into 'column markers' or used to explore 2D shapes and angles. Paved areas, can be re-imagined as a giant coordinate grid on which to explore position and direction, or for playing number games.

Using a table like the one below, make a list of the potentially free resources you have in your setting for your maths activity:

1. Write your chosen maths curriculum activity in the left column. Be specific, for example Y4 - identify acute and obtuse angles, or compare and order angles up to 2 right angles by size.
2. Add the resource(s) you will need for the activity, including innovated natural or existing resources readily available from your setting, in the right column.
3. Does the activity need to be simplified or modified in any way? Why might this be?

Curriculum activity	Resources

One of the concerns identified in the National Connections Demonstration Project included lack of access to resources. (Waite *et al.*, 2016).

After completing the activity above, do you consider 'resources' to be a barrier to taking the learning outdoors?

## Task 3: Barriers and solutions

In this task you will consider other possible barriers to delivering your chosen activity outdoors.

Using a table like the one below, identify possible barriers to taking your chosen learning activity outdoors and consider how they can be overcome:

1. In the left column identify a potential barrier to delivering the activity outdoors.
2. In the right column identify one way the barriers can be effectively overcome.
3. Does the activity need to be simplified or modified in any way? Why might this be?

Barriers	Solutions

You will probably find that there is usually an achievable solution - in other words a case of 'where there's a will there's a way!'

## Task 4: Reflection on learning

Now that you have completed this CPD have a think about who might be the best person in your setting to take your ideas to, in order to discuss if and how your ideas could be implemented.

## Sources

Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Learning outside the classroom: manifesto*. Available at: <https://www.lotc.org.uk/about/manifesto>. (Accessed: 17 May 2020)

Lambert, D., Roberts, M. and Waite, S. (eds.) (2020) *National Curriculum Outdoors – a complete scheme of work (KS1)*. London: Bloomsbury Education.

Starbuck Education (2019) *Outdoor Learning Tips - Writing Opportunities - Rainy Weather Ideas*. 28 January. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKhZXNzDaco> (Accessed; 17 May 2020)

Waite, S. (2010) 'Losing our way? The downward path for outdoor learning for children aged 2–11 years', *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 10 (2), pp. 111-126. doi: 10.1080/14729679.2010.531087.

Waite, S., Passy, R., Gilchrist, M., Hunt, A. and Blackwell, I. (2016) *Natural Connections Demonstration Project, 2012-2016: Final Report*. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR215. Available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6636651036540928> (Accessed: 17 May 2020)

## Further reading

Find some helpful ideas from about delivering outdoor learning from the Scottish Government, available at <https://education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf>

Visit the Nature Friendly Schools website, available at [www.naturefriendlyschools.co.uk](http://www.naturefriendlyschools.co.uk), to find out more about government support for outdoor learning.

To find out more about the benefits of outdoor learning, visit the Institute of Outdoor Learning website, available at <https://www.outdoor-learning.org/Good-Practice/Research-Resources/About-Outdoor-Learning>.

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