



# The Learning Institute

## Taking learning outdoors Part 1: An introduction to outdoor learning

### 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 an 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 one of this CPD unit explores the relevance and benefits of taking learning outside the classroom.

### 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.

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## Introduction

The 2014 statutory National Curriculum for England (Department for Education (DfE), 2013) provides autonomy for schools to choose how and where to deliver the outline of core knowledge and objectives of the National Curriculum. So - why not deliver learning outdoors?

## Objectives

- To explore how outdoor learning can enhance learning and make it memorable
- To begin to examine how resources can be used for inspiring learning opportunities outdoors

## Resources

Pen and paper for note taking

Internet access to following:

- Five reasons why you should take your class outside [article and video] available at [www.tes.com/news/watch-sir-ken-robinson-shares-five-reasons-you-should-take-your-class-outside](http://www.tes.com/news/watch-sir-ken-robinson-shares-five-reasons-you-should-take-your-class-outside)
- The outdoor learning environment [video] available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yC2lrZTd4t0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yC2lrZTd4t0)

## Task 1

Close your eyes and think back to a memorable experience from your own childhood.

- What comes to mind?
- Is it an indoor experience or an outdoor experience?

Purposeful outdoor experiences 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).

So now think about what made the experience memorable for you?

- Where specifically did the activity take place?
- What was the motivation for the activity?
- What were you physically doing?
- How much choice was there in the activity?
- Who else was involved in the activity?
- Can you imagine the expression on your face at the time and what does this tell you about how you were feeling?

## Task 2

"What really drives education is curiosity; trying to fill gaps in our understanding, and the world around us is a tremendous resource to stimulate that curiosity." (Robinson, 2016)

Watch the short video, available at <https://www.tes.com/news/watch-sir-ken-robinson-shares-five-reasons-you-should-take-your-class-outside>, in which Sir Ken Robinson, British author, speaker and international advisor on education, sets out his reasons why taking learning outside is a good idea:

- What are the five reasons that he gives?
- Do you agree with him or have any thoughts to add?

## Task 3

As you may have found in task one, outdoor experiences help us to make sense of the world by generating physical and emotional links to learning and into our memories (DfES, 2006). Using the outdoors to engage learners with the world using an 'experiential' learning or 'learning to learn' approach is fundamental to the Early Years approach and a recent study by Araneda *et al* (2019, cited in Lambert, Roberts and Waite, 2020) confirmed that children and young people prefer a practical hands-on subject teaching approach.

Watch the Teachers TV clip *The outdoor learning environment*, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yC2lrZTd4t0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yC2lrZTd4t0) (running time 14 mins) to see what this could look like.

- As you watch, note ideas or comments from the presenters that you find particularly interesting.
- After watching, choose five words that you feel capture the experiences of the children.
- Try to write your own definition of 'experiential learning' incorporating these words.

## Task 4: Reflection on learning

Note down your responses to the following questions:

- What knowledge did I already have that has been refreshed by this CPD?
- How has this CPD developed my knowledge and understanding?
- How can I apply what I now know to my practice?

## Sources

Department for Education (2013) *The National Curriculum for England*. Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum) (Accessed 20 May 2020)

Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Learning outside the classroom: manifesto*. Available at: <https://www.lotc.org.uk/about/manifesto/> (Accessed: 20 May 2020)

EDCHAT (2012) *Teachers TV: The outdoor environment*. 5 December. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yC2lrZTd4t0> (Accessed: 20 May 2020)

Lambert, D., Roberts, M. and Waite, S. (eds.) (2020) *National Curriculum outdoors – a complete scheme of work (Year 4)*. London: Bloomsbury Education

Ward, H. (2016) *Watch: Sir Ken Robinson shares five reasons you should take your class outside*. Available at: <https://www.tes.com/news/watch-sir-ken-robinson-shares-five-reasons-you-should-take-your-class-outside> (Accessed: 20 May 2020)

## Further reading

- 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.
- Look at the lessons learned about outdoor learning from the Natural Connections Demonstration Project (2012-2016). The report is available at [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/7/7634/Transforming\\_Outdoor\\_Learning\\_in\\_Schools\\_SCN.pdf](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/7/7634/Transforming_Outdoor_Learning_in_Schools_SCN.pdf).
- Here are some helpful ideas from about delivering outdoor learning from the Scottish Government, available at <https://education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-through-outdoor-learning.pdf>.
- 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>.
- To find out more about the statutory requirements of the EYFS, have a look at the DfE framework, available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/596629/EYFS\\_STATUTORY\\_FRAMEWORK\\_2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/596629/EYFS_STATUTORY_FRAMEWORK_2017.pdf).

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