

Winter Forest School Activities

Forest School is a whole year round, seasonal activity. The winter months can be challenging-mostly due the weather but also because at first glance it might seem that there is not a lot going on in the outdoor environment, however, with a bit of imagination and lots of warm clothes it will be a lot of fun!

I have put together a selection of activities that you can try with your children if you and they would like. They are by no means compulsory as at Forest School we plan activities that reflect the children's interests, things they ask to do and sometimes to continue learning that we might have done in class but they are allowed to choose because Forest School is child-led. I have tried to keep the ideas accessible as I know that not everyone will have access to a garden and obviously we must all **follow the guidance on exercising outside** so some of these can be done inside the home.

A note on safety – at Forest School one of the most important 'rules' that we teach the children from day one is 'No pick, no lick'. This means that we only use natural items that have fallen from trees or plants rather than picking from them when they are growing (the exception to this may be if you have a garden and you are happy for them to take a few flowers or leaves you might choose to do this). It also means that we never put anything in our mouths, including fingers. We always wash our hands when we have finished-we are all experts at this now anyway! I would also advise that if you do not know what something is then leave it alone, we tell the children that they should always check with an adult if they are not sure when collecting natural items and we never touch mushrooms, fungi or berries.

Ice Sculptures



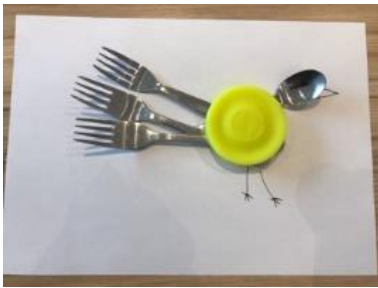
Aim: to explore the changes that happen when water freezes and make some interesting art.

You will need:

- Yogurt pot or empty plastic container.
 - String.
 - Natural materials collected from outside e.g.: feathers, leaves, cones, stones, sticks.
 - Or some small waterproof items from inside your house e.g.: small plastic toys, teaspoon, counters or dice etc.
 - Somewhere cold to free the water-either outside if cold enough or the freezer.
1. Gather your equipment and place the items into the plastic pot.
 2. If you want to use the string to make a hanger place the string half in the pot and half out.
 3. Fill with water (make sure the string is in the water if using)
 4. Place carefully into a freezer or outside overnight if the weather is cold.
 5. The next day remove the ice block from the container and explore the ice. When we do this activity at Forest School the children enjoy watching the ice melt and exploring the way it looks, feels and smells. We ask questions about the way the ice changes when it melts, what happens and why. Perhaps they could make predictions about what might be happening.

A word of caution-please supervise and ensure that they are not holding the ice for too long or placing it onto their skin for long periods of time.

Leaf Creatures



Aim: To use natural items to collage creatures and faces.

You will need:

- Paper
- Pens/pencils
- Some leaves, twigs, acorns, cones, grass, stones or items from around the home that make interesting shapes.
- Imagination.

1. Gather some materials from the garden or whilst out on a walk (if you are unable to get outside you can try making a picture using items from inside the house).
2. Assemble on a piece of paper or suitable background and let your imagination run wild.

This is a good activity for encouraging children to look in more detail at the natural items that they find and experimenting with shapes and colours. Even in the winter months there are things that you can find outside that you can use, a bunch of twigs can be re-imagined into many things!

Clay faces



This is a really fun activity that we enjoy in the Autumn term at Forest School but it works well at any time of the year.

You will need:

- Natural clay/mud or playdoh/plasticine if making indoors.
 - Selection of natural materials.
 - Imagination.
1. Find a suitable tree or fence to make your face on – a rough surface works better for the clay or mud to stick to. If indoors maybe a board or wipe clean surface.
 2. Use your sticks, leaves, feathers or anything that you want to use to make interesting faces.
 3. Give your creation a name!

Toilet roll bird feeder



You will need:

- Toilet roll.
 - String.
 - Stick – if you want to add a perch.
 - No added sugar and salt peanut butter.
1. Smother a cardboard tube in peanut butter
 2. Roll it in bird seed and thread some string through the hole.
 3. Tie it up in your garden where birds will feel safe eating.

Sit back and wait for the birds to arrive. If you need some help with identifying common garden birds, the link below takes you to the RSPB online bird identifier.

[Bird Identifier | British Garden Birds and Many More - The RSPB](#)

Don't forget-this year's Big Garden Birdwatch is happening 29th-31st January. Follow the link below to find out how to get involved. Maybe you could make some bird feeders to attract some more birds into your garden or outside space.

[Big Garden Birdwatch | Join the fun - The RSPB](#)

Matchbox Scavenger Hunt



This is a nice idea for when you are out hunting for interesting natural materials. Anything that can fit inside a matchbox or small box. At school we also use egg boxes which is good because you can challenge your children to find six different items-you could even do this indoors if you are unable to get outside.

Finally, if you are out on a walk here is a list of things to spot that can be found at this time of year:

- glossy evergreen leaves
- a lacy leaf skeleton
- bumpy bark
- fallen tree cones
- a y-shaped stick
- animal tracks on the ground

See if you can spot them all!