

Teach it Outside

Clothing, equipment and useful resources for outdoor learning

The equipment you'll need for each outdoor learning lesson are clearly itemised on each Teach it Outside lesson plan. Most lessons require natural materials – what these are and where to find them is described below. Any other equipment is available with a quick raid of the PE, science or resource cupboard. We use cut up white shower curtains as background – easily sourced from large supermarkets.

Having you class appropriately dressed for outdoor learning is a common concern. Before you ask your school to invest in cupboards full of waterproof trousers see the clothing section below.

Useful resources for your outdoor learning lessons

Natural materials including stones, sticks, acorns, seeds are free and usually easy to find. You can keep these in boxes or buckets for when you need them or ask the children to collect what they need at the beginning of each session.

If you don't have many trees overhanging your school grounds, woodland or field, we have put together some top tips to build up stock. These can be stored in a shed, small plastic greenhouse or outdoor storage box.

1. Take children out on a local walk to collect natural resources - Ikea bags are great for collecting and transporting materials.
2. Set a competition each term for the child who can collect the most conkers, acorns, seashells, pebbles etc. (Do this in a class not across the whole school or storage can become a real issue!)
3. Letters home requesting natural materials and or clean plastic containers. This can be linked to the school environmental policy and approach to reusing and recycling.
4. At the end of year raid school skips for old trays, sports equipment etc. You will be amazed at what you can find.
5. Ask at local DIY shops and building companies for scrap pieces of wood, timber, scaffolding boards etc.
6. Tyres are easy and free to get hold of - ring up your local tyre company, they might even deliver.
7. Contact your local council or tree surgeons to ask for logs, wood discs etc. Even for branches and sticks - many are happy to help when they know it is for a school.

There are a few items that it may be useful to buy in. These include bamboo canes, guttering, string, small tarpaulins, buckets, small gardening tools. These can all be bought from garden or DIY centres. Don't forget shower curtains, available from supermarkets such as Asda for as little as £2.

How and where to store your resources

It's worth making sure collected natural materials are clean and dry before you store them. Airtight & labelled boxes make it easy to find what you need as well.

There are a range of storage options to suit your budget and space:

- Plastic greenhouses provide a cheap waterproof shelved solution. They do need to be placed in sheltered positions and tied or weighted to stop them from blowing around. Prices start from £20.
- Outdoor storage boxes are dry, durable and usually lockable. Prices start from £40.
- Storage shed - there are plastic or wooden options to choose from with prices rising from £100.

Outdoor clothing

Sending a message home to parents and carers to send their children in appropriate clothing for the weather does not always yield results - some children don't have wellies, woolly hats or waterproof coats, others forget to bring them. Most of the year this doesn't matter but it's always worth having a stock of wellies, spare socks (feet get cold in wellies in winter), and waterproof coats. If your school is not in a position to buy them it's always worth asking parents and carers for donations of old wellies and waterproof coats to be used as back up.

Waterproof trousers are expensive and rarely used, plus it takes ages for your whole class to put them on. If there is any money it is better spent on coats and wellies.

If you are buying waterproof coats remember to buy BIG! This makes it much quicker when you're getting you class ready for an outdoor lesson, as they can be slipped over their existing coats to keep the children warm and dry.