



Care and
Learning
Alliance

35 PLAY Ideas

for everyone supporting children
and young people



Just Play



1

Use loose parts: think about using items such as milk crates, tyres, pallets that could be used in a variety of ways, for example to make a simple obstacle course or build dens. Small natural items such as stones, leaves, twigs make great loose parts that can be used for imaginative play, props for storytelling and making pictures.

2


Create a mud kitchen area: this doesn't need to be a structure—all that's needed is a couple of bowls, old saucepans, wooden spoons, whisk, ladle, containers available, add a little soil and water for mixing. Make watering cans by making small holes in the lid of milk bottles. All of these can be used as a stimulus for a variety of play.

3

Mark making: there are lots of opportunities for mark making outside. A bucket of water with paintbrushes on slab, chalk, make up watery paint in old spray bottles, use mud! Perhaps you could use a blackboard or take out clipboards with paper and pens attached. Easiest of all - use small twigs/sticks to mark make in soil or sand, extend variety by providing small and large scale.

4

Storytelling: make a cosy nook for families to read stories together, take out puppets and small-world toys to enhance storytelling. Create a collection of story stones which can add to. Make a storytelling 'den.'





5

Small world play: a collection of cars, dinosaurs, trains, farm or jungle animals can encourage children to use them in different ways playing in a natural environment outdoors. You might create small world environments for this eg. providing small discs of sawn branches can really help inspire young children's creativity making houses or villages.

6

Musical instruments: which instruments could be used outside? Make your own shakers from empty plastic containers securely fastened, filled with pasta/rice. Recycle old saucepans, lids, wooden spoons, lengths of pipe with metal spoons to create a music wall. Create a playlist of different types of music, encourage movement to the music - it's a whole different experience doing this outdoors!

7

Sand Play/ Water tray: provide small scale in cat litter trays for individual use, larger scale in a baby bath or tuff tray. Ensure kept clean and covered if left outdoors. Use a variety of recycled items, containers, small buckets, metal straws, sieves etc to blow, scoop, pour, empty, fill, transport. Larger scale—use small lengths of PVC guttering to channel water, or small balls/other items to travel through—how fast do they go?

8

Natural World: explore developing buds on trees, plants, looking at patterns on bark, leaves. If space available, plant tubs with seeds for flowers or vegetables, or scatter wildflower seeds, then watch them grow. Feeding birds, looking at different plants /trees - big, small, colour, shape exploring and developing a love for the natural environment.



9

Create a simple obstacle course together - role model how to use it.

10

Pretend to be different animals, e.g. elephant swing a trunk, frog hopping, lion pouncing etc.



11

Hide and seek—this could be with families hiding or hiding a big teddy or toy!

12

Go on a treasure hunt—use recycled egg boxes or small containers to collect natural treasure or hide items linked to story or a particular theme e.g. colour, number of items.

13

Mirror people — copying/mirroring the actions of an adult, children can take in turns to lead/ suggest actions.

14

Use hoops/chalk circles to jump between, run round, stand inside, roll along the ground.

15

Air obstacle course - use objects from around the house and create an obstacle course - using drinking straws try to blow your ball around the course. Get lots of people involved and hold races!

16

Horizontal Basketball - Using a washing basket, a long rope/string/small balls and or scrunched up paper. Stand behind the rope/string and aim the balls into the basket. Move the rope further away for challenge.

17

Skittles - collect empty plastic bottles and try to knock them down. Add soil/water/sand/ to make them heavier for challenge. Pop some numbers on them and keep score.

18

What's the time Mr Wolf - adult or child acts Mr Wolf, others gradually stepping up behind the wolf as he tells the time then great excitement getting chased at the end.

19

Ball Play - roll up a some old clean socks, or tightly scrunched up recycled newspaper to make your own balls. Get an old sheet and use as a parachute - bounce the balls around - draw a target on the sheet for target practice!

Create a 'scarecrow' make a face and body from an old pillowcase full of straw or recycled packaging, paint a face, dress your scarecrows in recycled clothes and a hat.

20

21

Make kites and streamers - use recycled carrier bags, tie on ribbons for streamers, tie the string to the handle, throw it up in the air and run like the wind. Great for a windy day!

Nature's Rainbow—look for things in the outdoor environment to represent the colours of the rainbow and create your own colourful arc.

22

23

Bubble painting— a bowl of bubble mix, add food colouring or paint, mix until nice and frothy then press paper or a strong kitchen roll on top to get your painting.

Brush with nature — using natural materials as paintbrushes e.g. dip conkers, pinecones, sticks, leaves, moss and paint on large stones, paper small and large.

24

25

Transient Art —choose from long grass, leaves, twigs, small stones, etc to make pictures big or small scale—take a photo to create a memory.

26



Noughts and Crosses

A very simple easy game to play with sticks is Noughts and Crosses. Find 4 equal size sticks and set up your grid. You can use stones, pine cones leaves for your counters.

Wind chimes

27

Collect a handful of long, straight sticks to make your own wind mobile. Paint the sticks, tie some string around each one and hang them from a branch or you can attach them to an old lid or plastic coat hanger. You can use leaves, pinecones etc. to decorate.

28

Traffic light game —run when something green is held up, run on the spot when something amber is held up and stop when a red item is held.

29

Chase games — children catching adult/carer, carer catching child; add some bubble blowing for some bubble chasing and catching—it's a different dynamic outdoors!

Build a Den

30

Provide old bedsheets, blankets, clothes pegs, cushions and pillows. Let the den building begin! It could become a cosy reading den or a superheroes control room!

Jenga boxes

31

Collect as many small boxes as possible e.g. cereal boxes, shoe boxes, toothpaste, biscuit boxes etc... (you will need more than 20 boxes for this game). Build the boxes up in a tall tower (make your tower 2 or 3 boxes wide). Everyone takes turns to pull out a box with out knowing down the tower!

32

Memory Game - pop some random items on a tray - allow time for children to look at the items. Cover the tray with a cloth and take an item away. Who can spot which one is missing?

33

Grab some old mail or newspapers and make some aeroplanes!

34

Grab some toys that can safely go in the water, fill up a basin and let the fun begin!

35

Stick/twigs—making wands, shapes, make little homes for an animal, story character or nests for bird



Useful websites

CALA Play and Learning Ideas

<https://www.careandlearningalliance.co.uk/fun-ideas-children/>

Parent Club

<https://www.parentclub.scot/topics/play-learn>

Play Scotland

<https://www.playscotland.org/play/im-bored/>

Bumps to Bairns

<https://bumps2bairns.com/>

