



Encouraging Children Outdoors

Heading outdoors with children can be the best way to spend the warmer afternoon or early mornings. Children are naturally curious and love to play, this is key to a great OOSH program. There is something unique about outdoor play. It offers children more of a chance to explore and play freely.

Children today spend more time indoors watching TV, playing computer games, or have little time for outdoor play due to an excess of adult organised activities

Children get the most out of play when they are able to take control of and create their own play. This can be as simple as climbing trees, or building cubbies or creating a outdoor garden, and can often involve taking risks and dealing with new challenges. Outdoor play is vital for children's social and personal growth, and should be a part of every child's day.



- ★ Use their imagination
- ★ Learn how their bodies move.
- ★ Another crucial part of children's social and personal growth is letting them meet and play with other children. How many times do you see children of differing ages playing together outdoors?

■ LETTING KIDS BE KIDS!

As children are often more restricted in their lives, the OOSH environment and being outdoor can involve risk, however some 'risks' are simply from having fun:

- ★ Making mess
- ★ Being noisy
- ★ Getting dirty or wet
- ★ Small cuts and bruises that are quick to heal
- ★ Dealing with uneven play surfaces and new play areas
- ★ Initial fears of trying something new
- ★ Learning to play with other children

■ BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR PLAY

Playing outdoors gives children opportunities to:

- ★ Problem solve
- ★ Test their abilities and experience adventure
- ★ See what activities, games and play spaces they like
- ★ Get over their fears
- ★ Become more independent
- ★ Cope with stress
- ★ Make sense of the world
- ★ Increase self-esteem and self-belief
- ★ Nurture the outdoor environment
- ★ Learn about the weather and different seasons
- ★ Build resilience

■ IMPORTANT TIPS

When rethinking the value of outdoor play...

- ★ Provide chances for outdoor play as often as possible
- ★ Coping with challenges is a natural part of outdoor play
- ★ Let the children try new things even if it does mean getting dirty or wet
- ★ Exploring, problem solving and testing limits is how children learn.
- ★ Try not to set too many limits on children's outdoor play
- ★ Provide positive support and supervision.



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