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Mud kitchen

Mixing soil with water and other materials gives children endless possibilities for their learning and development. For younger children, mud kitchens can provide a whole variety of different learning opportunities. You can offer a mud kitchen all year round in most settings that have an outdoor area, with the right warm and waterproof clothing. Alternatively, you can consider offering this type of play as part of visits to wild areas.

A mud kitchen includes familiar elements of the home corner from indoor play, enriched through the special nature of being outside. They do not need to be fancy or cost much, they can be made from mostly scrounged, begged and discovered items. An outdoor kitchen unit (which can be made from pallets or boxes), pans, cooking implements and mud are the key ingredients.



Think about

- Mud is the key ingredient, but how will you access this? Will children make their own? You can provide a variety of colours, consistencies and textures using bagged top soil, compost, sand, gravel and water.
- Accessibility – if there isn't a nearby mud or sand patch, you can make these materials easy for children to access with big pots at floor level.
- Position – barriers like fences or walls can help to define the area of your mud kitchen.
- Water supply – a mud kitchen does not need to be near to a water source but if there is not an accessible source of water, a larger container with a tap or a water butt is a good option
- Risk benefit assessments, and health and safety – soil from open beds often is not suitable as it may be open to contamination from animals. Think about how you will prevent contamination of your mud kitchen when not in use and how often you will clean containers and utensils. Are you going to cover your mud kitchen at the end of each day?
- Clothing – aprons, waterproof clothing and boots to keep children warm and dry.
- 'Rules' for use such as numbers of children, handwashing and so on
- What other resources you might provide – herbs, sawdust, grass, flower petals can be used for concoctions or decoration, containers for transporting water; other natural materials like shells, pine cones, leaves; or even a blackboard to turn a mud kitchen into a café.