

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Top tips: Branching out - creating a forest school in your nursery

A forest school provides an outdoor learning space that promotes physical health, mental well-being, creativity, resilience, independence and social skills, while instilling a love of nature. The open-ended quality of outdoor play encourages a curiosity and a motivation for learning, setting the foundation of life-long enquiry.

Here are some tips to get you started:

- Forest school leaders should have a level 3 forest school qualification and an up-to-date paediatric first aid qualification with outdoor elements
- Familiarise yourself with the [Forest School Association \(FSA\)](#) to check that your provision is in line with their six core principles that emphasise hands-on, child-led learning
- Choose an outdoor space with a variety of natural elements, e.g. trees, bushes, grass, rocks etc. If you don't have available space, try speaking to other providers about the possibility of sharing space or to local landowners about access. It should be safe, secure and accessible
- Conduct a risk assessment to identify potential hazards and develop strategies to manage those risks while still maintaining a stimulating environment that offers challenge
- Formulate relevant working documents to support a forest school - policies and procedures that set out roles and responsibilities for all staff involved
- Create a curriculum that aligns with the forest school principles – focus on exploration, developing resilience, independence, creativity and enhancing children's connection to nature
- Provide tools such as magnifying glasses, trowels, binoculars. Teach how to use them safely and model their use



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- Ensure you offer children the opportunity to take appropriate supported risks, such as climbing, making dens and using tools
- Observe and respond – let children explore and take the lead. Observe their interests, respond to their curiosity and questions
- Include time for reflection in each session to share experiences and observations to help reinforce and embed learning.

NDNA products to support you with these tips

- Face to face training: [Risky Play](#)
- Factsheet: [Risky Play](#)
- Training: [Developing Quality Outdoor Provision](#)

And more resources at www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna