

Outdoor environments

DEVELOPING OUTDOOR LEARNING SPACES



Booklet two of the **Outdoor learning series**
by Pete Moorhouse



community playthings





Embracing the outdoors

The outdoors is one of the best possible environments in which to learn. Children experience joy and excitement as they play outdoors. They make discoveries and thrive in well-resourced and well-planned outdoor spaces. This booklet explores ways to establish and develop rich enabling environments. Our accompanying booklet *Learning outdoors* focuses on pedagogy and the high-quality learning and development that the outdoors supports.

The benefits of learning outdoors are far-reaching and it is heartening to see so many settings around the country embracing outdoor learning.¹ It is more important than ever that children play and learn outdoors as young children today are spending ever-increasing amounts of time indoors. They are having fewer outdoor experiences and are less connected to their natural world.² There is overwhelming evidence that the outdoors is where children learn and grow best.³ Benefits for health, physical development, creativity, connecting with nature, well-being and communication are plentiful.

Children's curiosity is at the heart of learning – it is the catalyst for engagement and higher-level learning. Outdoors,

children have authentic experiences that allow them to ask important questions about the world and ways in which they can interact with it. We need to create outdoor environments that support this curiosity and that are full of possibilities – environments that enable children to explore, investigate, make connections and express their creativity in a multitude of different ways and experience the wonder of nature. They need spaces in which to communicate, work together, stretch their thinking, investigate, explore and discover, and spaces for quiet reflection.

Outdoors, children are more exuberant and active; they use more language and employ their senses to a greater extent. The outdoors should be given at least the same importance as indoor space, receiving similar amounts of resources, provocations and adult interaction. The space should provide challenge and have the resources to allow children to develop their creative and critical thinking skills across all areas of learning.

Embracing outdoor learning will contribute greatly to giving children the best start in life – benefitting their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.





Developing outdoor learning environments

The outdoor area must be carefully designed and richly resourced to offer varied experiences with possibilities for playful exploration. It can be helpful to zone the outdoor area so children can navigate easily and find what they need, and to ensure that a variety of challenges are available. But it must also be dynamic and flexible, allowing children to be in control of their environment and its possibilities, to make connections, modify, and adapt. It is important that the outdoor environment reflects children's current interests.

The awe and wonder of the natural world can be explored in a variety of ways (splashing in puddles, seeing the detail in a leaf or observing woodlice), and stimulates a wide range of play, supporting learning right across the curriculum. Include natural habitat areas, a gardening area, planting troughs and flower beds – all these provide connection with nature. Focus on natural materials such as wood, logs, stone, sand, water and mud. These all have endless possibilities for play and are also readily available and relatively cheap.

In terms of physical development there needs to be a variety of elements to stimulate and challenge. These should

include opportunities to develop gross and fine motor skills, coordination, balance, dexterity and agility. Having a combination of fixed apparatus (climbing frame, outdoor sand and water equipment) and loose parts (planks and stumps, outdoor blocks) which allow children to create their own challenges works well. You can also provide an assortment of accessories such as balls, skittles, ropes, bean bags, hula-hoops, bikes and so on.

There are multiple opportunities for creative expression outdoors. Loose parts – various objects that can be combined in open-ended ways – provide children with many possibilities to construct their own learning. Loose parts don't have a predetermined outcome and can be combined and transformed in countless different ways. Detailed arrangements and patterns may arise; sometimes the parts are used representationally or are given symbolic meaning and narratives emerge. These expressions allow children more breadth in their learning. We've all seen just how engaging a simple cardboard box can be, and the limitless ideas children come up with whilst ignoring the "toy" inside. Loose parts are the starting point of collaborative work for role play and in-depth investigation.



Loose parts can be natural materials, recycled items or prepared objects such as blocks. It is best to provide a wide range of resources. American psychologist James Gibson⁴ talked about “affordance theory,” where objects are viewed in terms of their “affordances” rather than having specific purposes. Architect Simon Nicholson⁵ states that the creative opportunities are proportional to the variety of loose parts available and that we need to work with materials that can be interpreted in a number of ways to help form new connections, encouraging creative representation and symbolic thinking.

When we provide a selection of natural loose parts (twigs, tree rings, conkers, leaves, pine cones, shells, sand, stones, branches), children will express their imagination in different ways as they join materials to create arrangements, patterns, constructions, landscapes and narratives. Sometimes it’s all about the pattern – lining up objects, creating radiating patterns – other times it becomes imbued with narrative – “the log with the conkers on is where the hairy monster lives.” On other occasions children become fascinated with the physical properties: carefully observing surfaces,

marvelling at the patterns on fir cones, or discovering which objects float. Some children prefer to work alone but on the whole loose parts encourage collaborative play. Once children are familiar with loose parts play they become more respectful of each other's work. At Akasaki Nursery in Japan, when children wished to leave their work they left their photograph next to it, to indicate that they would be returning to work on it later on – and this was respected by the other children. Natural materials pique children's interest and curiosity as they explore textures, weights, patterns, the coldness of stone, the warmth of wood and the different smells of these objects.

Recycled materials can also become an outdoor loose parts resource – objects such as crates, ropes, tubes, guttering, nets, cones, and planks. These allow many opportunities for collaborative problem solving and complex decision making as children work together to create different structures or scenarios. Items are transformed into a boat, den, castle, obstacle course or sculpture. It is useful to have some larger resources too, such as tyres and planks, where children are required to work together, providing even more opportunities for problem solving. Children construct numerous imaginary scenarios as they build a rocket launcher or a café. Their work frequently evolves into dramatic play. Role play often works even better outdoors as children create props and it seems more authentic. Many children are attracted by the high levels of action and social interaction as their communal projects evolve.



“In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it.”

Simon Nicholson

The Community Playthings Outlast blocks are another wonderful example of a loose parts resource allowing multiple explorations and opportunities to make children's ideas come to life. The hands-on experience of block play develops many



skills, including children's mathematical and scientific thinking as they explore spatial relationships, balance and construction techniques. Large block play encourages communication, collaboration, and problem solving skills due to the scale of the work, whereas smaller blocks facilitate individual expression and support fine motor skills. Children become more dexterous as they explore balance and use a range of movements, bolstering their physical development.

Block play allows children to construct their own learning. Children become engineers as they build bridges, architects as they design houses, and artists and designers as they create sculptures and arrange patterns. They create a vast range of constructions from cars to boats and petrol stations ... the list is endless. Block play allows us amazing opportunities to observe children, giving us an insight into their thinking processes.

Useful loose parts resources to provide include:

- **Natural materials:** tree rings, pebbles, shells, pinecones, conkers, acorns, sticks, bamboo, sections of bark, straw, leaves, seeds, seed pods, stones, twigs
- **Recycled materials:** planks, small ladders, heavy pieces of material, sheets/tarpaulin, crates, large cardboard boxes, blocks or pieces of foam, industrial tubing, cable spools, carpet and carpet squares, large cones, pipe and gutter sections, ropes and string, tape, tyres, wheels, poles, netting and so on!
- **Blocks:** The Community Playthings highly durable Outlast blocks are ideal for open-ended outdoor play. Outlast blocks are made out of wood that has undergone acetylation, a nontoxic process that renders the wood rot-resistant and prevents warping and shrinking with moisture. The Community Playthings Hollow blocks may also be brought outdoors, but must be stored under cover and kept dry.

Your outdoor play area should also include resources that promote learning across all areas of curriculum, and help make connections between different areas. For example, for mathematics provide tape measures, meter sticks and measuring vessels; for science: pulleys, scales and magnifying glasses. For literacy, create a book area and offer a variety of mark-making tools such as chalk, charcoal, paint, mud, and an outdoor easel. Include spaces and props that encourage role play, such as play-houses, stage areas, willow



dens and tents, and make a place outside for dressing-up costumes.

Communication is greatly improved outdoors as children are free to move and mix and are generally less inhibited. Being outdoors facilitates working on a larger scale, and bigger projects necessitate collaboration, so rich dialogue develops as children negotiate, problem solve and communicate ideas. Children, being more relaxed outdoors, are more likely to use language as they engage in their learning – be it through role play, discovering a ladybird or



constructing with blocks. This can be particularly pronounced with children who are less confident and use fewer words indoors. Create smaller spaces where children can communicate more intimately such as in dens or on a bench. These spaces also provide a place where children can be alone and relax, or just lie back and watch the clouds.

Storage and tidying up

For the outdoor area to function successfully the resources need to be readily accessible and easily tidied up, so providing good storage options is an important consideration. Children should take an active role in setting up and tidying away and caring for the outdoor space.

Outdoor zones:

- Physical development areas: (climbing frame; balancing beam/logs; bikes/scooters/trikes)
- Large construction area with loose parts like crates, planks, stumps.
- Block play area
- Multisensory area including sounds, textures, and moving parts
- Water play
- Sand
- Mud kitchen
- Fire pit
- Area for den making
- Spaces for different loose parts investigations
- Areas with role play /props
- Playhouse
- Quiet zones/willow dens/benches
- Gardening area
- Woodworking area
- Spaces for mark making – chalk, paint, water, charcoal
- Spaces for creative arts
- Spaces with mathematical/scientific resources

Provision for two-year-olds outdoors

With more nursery places being made available for two-year-olds, it is important to think how the outdoor environment can best cater to their needs. For the most part,



the environment can be similar to that developed for older children, but some equipment and resources will need to be specific to provide age-appropriate challenges and encourage exploration. Smaller scale climbing equipment or lighter building blocks may be suitable. Two-year-olds are insatiably curious, constantly exploring and discovering: “what is it?”, and “what can I do with it?” They are particularly attracted to multi-sensory equipment, sound



equipment, and things that move and can be manipulated such as catches and objects that rotate. They enjoy sand and water play, filling, emptying, transporting and working with loose parts, sorting and arranging, and especially stacking and knocking down!

Young children are developing their physicality, coordination and balance. They actively seek out challenges as they

run, climb, slide, swing, spin, roll, jump, and bounce. They are developing muscle control as they carry, tip, push, pull, fill, empty, build, stack, dig and sweep. They are constantly experiencing and testing their full range of movement and what they can do with it.

Two-year-olds experience a rapid period of brain development with emerging language,

cognitive function, emotional development and physical growth. The resources and experiences we provide will stimulate their curiosity and encourage deeper exploration and experimentation.

Catering for special educational needs

Careful thought needs to be given to how the outdoor environment can be made as accessible as possible for children with special needs. The government equality act states: “An education provider has a duty to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to make sure disabled students are not discriminated against,”⁶ but often these children continue to miss out on many play opportunities that are crucial to their emotional, social and physical development.

Ensure the environment is as inclusive as possible by discovering what adaptations or additions are necessary to provide suitable experiences and challenges and allowing as much equal access as reasonably possible. Consult with parents to get their ideas and feedback. Responding to children with special educational needs means we need to be continuously re-evaluating what is working and what improvements and refinements can be made to ensure inclusivity and provide targeted development opportunities.



“We are trying to create an environment where education will be almost inevitable.”

Jan White



Case study

The value of loose parts is illustrated in this case study by class teacher Libby Fletcher-Gardiner at St Werburgh's Park Nursery School in Bristol.

Here at St Werburgh's Park Nursery School, part of our philosophy is good quality outdoor learning. We have many loose parts outside in our garden area, including large cable wheels, crates (some with rope attached to act as pulleys), guttering, piping and tubing, tyres and of course a variety of wooden blocks. Recently we have received the new outdoor Community Playthings Outlast blocks. These are a permanent feature of our outdoor provision alongside our other loose parts.

Today I came outside to find a group of boys from different classrooms and of different ages (2-4 years) working with self-initiated critical thinking using the blocks. The main structure they were creating was a rectangular shape with various extensions. I asked if I could join in and the boys happily accepted. Through observation I found the children had developed various job roles within the project. Phin, the project manager, took it upon himself to direct others and give praise for when they had put the block in a satisfactory position. "Yes!! That's it, that's good!" he would exclaim at



various points during the activity. As Phin worked he stood back and scrutinised his creation carefully before putting the blocks in place. He went right up to a block which has a hole through the middle and looked through it with fascination. Next he attached a circular block and spun it around. It was clear that he was discovering and investigating how things work. Elijah



and Ky-Mani were working in partnership. One would try with difficulty to move the heavier large blocks and the other would support, building both physical strength and a positive relationship. Some

children were adding to the structure, placing the blocks carefully adjacent to each other and creating shapes involving symmetry and pattern. Others came more transiently, balancing on the structure or

placing and arranging blocks around the main structure, and jumping on and off. Phin placed a long block on the ground in the middle and said “That could be the floor!” Other children liked this idea and joined in to collect all the longest blocks, showing awareness of shape and space, measures and pattern.

The structure turned into a house which then became a large-scale role-play area. The children visualised different things they needed in the house: a bed, TV and remote control, a sofa and a window to look out of. They then engaged in sustained shared thinking and extensive narrative. Eventually there was an unexplained fire in the house, which brought about a firefighters role-play experience.

On another day a group of children began to use the blocks in a placing and arranging activity. The blocks joined together at different points creating a large and interesting shape on the ground. The children spent a long time here, focussed and without much verbal communication, allowing each other the space and time to be involved and to test out their ideas. When it seemed that all was finished they balanced on the structure. When some of it wobbled they modified it until it seemed safe. Here the job roles were exploratory and artistic – early sculpture and design.

Through block play in our nursery the children are gaining countless skills: negotiation, acceptance, testing out ideas,



problem solving, developing narrative, visualisation, cooperation and so on. The open-ended nature of block play has links with all seven areas of learning highlighted in the EYFS document, “Development Matters”, including the Characteristics of Effective Learning.



Aesthetics of the outdoor environment

“Every human being has the potential to develop sensitivity to what is beautiful.” **John Dewey**

We too often overlook our role in cultivating children’s artistic sense. Beauty can transform the mundane and lift the spirit; countless people find tranquillity through aesthetic enjoyment – and children are particularly sensitive. Many early educational pioneers, such as Friedrich Froebel and Maria Montessori, talked at length about the importance of beauty. John Dewey discussed the need to endow ordinary experience with the aesthetic. In 1900 he wrote, “If the eye is constantly greeted by harmonious objects having elegance of form and colour, a standard of taste grows naturally.”⁷ In recent years, beauty has run into the danger of becoming less valued.

Aesthetics have the potential to be transformational; beauty can elevate the soul and encourage and impact well-being. We can play a role in nurturing children’s aesthetic sense.

Children are sophisticated visual thinkers. As John Berger said, “Children’s first language is visual, seeing comes before words.”⁸ At St Werburgh’s Park Nursery,



“The child absorbs his environment, takes everything from it and incarnates it in himself.” **Maria Montessori**



we did a photography project where three and four-year-olds took photos of what they considered beautiful in the garden; results showed just how aware they were. They were drawn to beauty and discussed how it made them feel. “This is my picture, it is of the water falling down.” Three-year-old

Danika had observed an overflowing gutter and photographed the trickle of descending water catching the light.

Whilst contemplating your outdoor layout and envisioning resources for each zone, keep aesthetic appeal in mind – both the

overall look and detail within each area. An attractive environment positively affects children's well-being and disposition to learn. Present resources in interesting ways to make them attractive and irresistible, drawing children in to investigate and further explore.

Our choices have an impact; a beautiful environment tells children – and parents – that we value them and believe they deserve the best. A variety of textural surfaces might be incorporated in various zones, and visually interesting elements and artworks add character. The more children are accustomed to beauty, the more they will appreciate the arts and nature – now and throughout life. They can help create artistic touches in the environment. At St Werburgh's Park Nursery, children use their woodwork skills to construct fabulous sculptures that certainly add aesthetic value to the environment.

Nature nurtures children aesthetically as well as emotionally and intellectually – another incentive to include flowers and

shrubs, boulders and logs, pebbles and cross-sections of trees in your outdoor area. Examining a leaf's intricate vein structure or a tree's growth rings helps a child make sense of the world and builds reverence for life. So incorporate plants, shrubs and trees where you can, as well as play structures and mud kitchens made of wood that blend with nature and have more appeal than plastic. When we organise the environment effectively we are developing children's visual acuity and aesthetic awareness as well as promoting well-being.

“Having eyes, but not seeing beauty; having ears, but not hearing music; having minds, but not perceiving truth; having hearts that are never moved and therefore never set on fire. These are the things to fear, said the headmaster.”

Tetsuko Kuroyanagi



Sustainability

It is now widely recognised that humanity faces urgent environmental challenges with the combined effects of global warming and pollution upon ecological balance and bio-diversity.

There are many opportunities for children learning outdoors to gain environmental understanding and develop respect for the natural world. Children in their early years are developing their fundamental attitudes and values. Being in a school that embeds sustainability into the everyday practice will have an influence, whether it is through recycling and minimising waste or choosing sustainable resources. Eco-schools support schools and provide further resources.⁹

Elements of the sustainability agenda can be incorporated in a number of ways. The children can learn about growing food

“No one will protect what they don’t care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced.” **David Attenborough**

and discover what grows locally, as well as helping to collect rain for watering. Maybe your school can generate solar or wind energy, look at ways to support local wildlife, or learn about growth through planting trees or watching frog spawn hatch. Care for living things such as pets, chickens, seeds, or flowers will develop understanding.

Experiencing the wonder of the natural world will imbue an affinity with nature and encourage children to value their environment, inspiring them to continue to cherish and protect our world.



The role of the adult

Learning outdoors utilises the same teaching skills employed in the classroom. What is crucial is the value and importance we as adults place on quality learning outdoors.

To begin with, we must embrace the outdoors ourselves. Children need role models who enjoy being outdoors, who are enthusiastic and make the most of any weather, and who are willing to get down and dirty. We need to come to work dressed ready to spend most of our day outdoors.

Let's take a look at the role we play in creating a rich outdoor environment. Beyond resourcing and arranging opportunities as starting points, we should actively observe, extend and reflect on children's learning. We need to show genuine interest and then sensitively interact, when appropriate, to extend their thinking by helping them develop their ideas, make new connections and find solutions. Respecting and valuing their interests is crucial and responding positively to their preferences and choices helps maintain higher-level engagement.

How we can provide children with as much access as possible to the outdoors? It is worth remembering that nowadays there



are many early years settings that spend most of their day learning outdoors. So we must think about where we expect learning to be taking place – how we set up the indoors and outdoors will have an impact on where children learn. How would it be if we start every day being outdoors? Maria Montessori was a passionate advocate of allowing children to move freely between indoors and outdoors, giving children choice, and this fluidity works effectively for many settings across the country.



In some nurseries the playground can be supervised in a detached manner, with the view that the children are outdoors to have a break and let off steam. But it's so important to engage! Communication often breaks down outside when practitioners only stand, so it is good to create places where staff can sit and get down to the children's level, stimulating more conversation and engagement.

As the outdoors is most often a shared space, teachers may not feel the same ownership as with their own classrooms.

Careful thought needs to be given to staffing numbers and to who has responsibility for ensuring resources are available and maintained, how things are set up, how tidying up works effectively and how we can respond to children's interests. When working outdoors, children from several classrooms may be collaborating on a project. It is beneficial for staff to rotate classrooms occasionally so they are familiar with all children in the setting, and thus are in a better position to be able to support all children with their outdoor learning.

We also may need to be culturally sensitive as some parents will come with different ideas about being out in all weather. Some cultures typically spend less time outdoors, and some parents may feel quite uncomfortable with their child being outside on a cold or rainy day. Others may feel children should remain indoors on sunny days or might be upset that their child is coming home muddy. We need to listen to parents' concerns, as well as explain the benefits of learning outdoors and why we believe these experiences are important.

Getting the best out of the outdoor environment is an ongoing process, so the important thing is to be moving in the right direction and focussing on providing rich learning opportunities. Ensuring that observations and documentation relate to outdoor learning can help embed this. This documentation is also a great way of sharing practice with other practitioners.



Final words

Implementing change can at times seem overwhelming. It is important to agree on priorities, set achievable objectives and then implement improvements on a realistic timescale. We are often faced by challenges, with limited budgets and lack of space, but remember that much can be achieved with creative thinking! Achieving all the changes we wish to make takes some time – the most important thing is to have a vision and be working towards it. We need to be on this journey with no final destination – as we should continually be refining, responding to interests, adding and taking away.

The Early Years 360° Environment Audit¹³ is a resource available to help audit your current environment (see resources section). The audit is designed to provide a framework to evaluate all aspects of the current environment and from all perspectives (children's, parents', governors', and teachers') and then draws attention to the areas that require development. Having children take photographs can be a useful tool to open up discussion and help them express their views; when reviewing images children often communicate much more than if asked direct questions.

The audit helps us set priorities. In terms of design – plan in broad strokes before focussing on the detail. Every setting is different, but design in response to your children and space available, and think

carefully about the zones and how the area will best be used. Remember, a lot can be achieved with a small budget and the most important resource is you!

Of course, experiencing environments beyond the setting is also important. There is a whole world out there waiting to be discovered! All children should get the opportunity to experience a variety of stimulating environments that will open up new areas of learning, with different ways of thinking and looking at things. Trips out to local parks, allotments, open spaces, the beach, or a farm will engage children and provide them with new experiences. Natural environments can make a profound impact on children. The forest school movement¹⁴ has done much in recent years to encourage rich experiences in woodland settings.

The benefits of the outdoors for children's well-being, health, learning and development are clear. Now, more than ever before, it is crucial that we embrace the outdoors to give children the best start in life. To experience the awe and wonder of nature, to be exuberant, to run hand in hand, to climb and swing, to dam the flow of water, to create mud soup, to discover a reflection in a puddle, to create a den that becomes a fire station, to work together to assemble a bridge from blocks ... all these build rich foundations for children's healthy social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

About the author



Pete Moorhouse is an early years creative consultant and artist-educator with a passion for supporting children's creativity and outdoor learning. He is an honorary research fellow at the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, researching creative and critical thinking in the early years. Pete is an associate trainer for Early Education and delivers CPD training throughout the UK and overseas. CPD trainings include enabling environments, creativity and woodwork. Pete is the author of several books and journal articles.

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References and resources:

Notes and references

¹ Examples include: littleforestfolk.com or elves-fairieswoodland-nursery.co.uk

² Natural Childhood Report – National Trust: nationaltrust.org.uk/documents/read-our-natural-childhood-report.pdf 2012

³ childrenandnature.org/research-library/ collection of research papers supporting outdoor learning. Provision for Learning Outdoors for Under 5s by Learning Through Landscapes and Early Childhood Forum, 2016

⁴ Gibson, J.J. (1977). *The Theory of Affordances. In Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing: Toward an Ecological Psychology* (pp. 67–82), R. Shaw & J. Bransford, University of Michigan

⁵ Nicholson, S. (1971). *How not to cheat children – The theory of loose parts, Landscape Architecture*, 62, 30-34.

⁶ The Children and Families Act (2014) rights-disabled-person/education-rights

⁷ Dewey, John (1916) *Democracy and education: an introduction to the philosophy of education*

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⁹ Berger, John (1972) *Ways of Seeing*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation: Penguin Books

¹⁰ Montessori, Maria (1949) *The Absorbent Mind*, Madras: Theosophical Pub. House

¹¹ Kuroyanagi, Tetsuko (1996) *Totto-Chan: The little girl at the window*, Kodansha International

¹² "Eco-Schools" is an international programme encouraging schools to embrace ecology and sustainability issues: eco-schools.org.uk/

¹³ The Early Years 360° Environment Audit: irresistible-learning.co.uk/resources/

¹⁴ Forest school Association: forestschoollassociation.org

Resources:

Equipment: Community Playthings: communityplaythings.co.uk/products/outdoor-play

LJMU Early Years Sustainability Resources: ljmu.ac.uk/microsites/early-childhood-education-for-sustainability

Early Years 360° Environment Audit: <http://irresistible-learning.co.uk/resources>

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Eco Schools: eco-schools.org.uk

Learning through landscapes: lfl.org.uk

Early Childhood Outdoors: earlychildhoodoutdoors.org

Thank you to the children and parents at St. Werburgh's Park Nursery, Bristol for the kind permission to use images.





Community Playthings produces solid wood furniture and play equipment. Our products are developed to support children's play and creativity. We design and manufacture at workshops in East Sussex and Kent. You can find free training resources and our full product line at **www.communityplaythings.co.uk**, or call **0800 387 457** for a Community Playthings catalogue.



Free training resources

Request online at communityplaythings.co.uk or phone **0800 387 457**



Spaces for Children

Room layout for 0-5 year olds

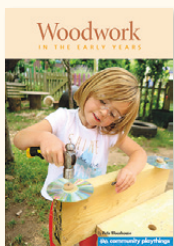
Design quality environments for children in your setting. This booklet will help you make the best use of your spaces.



A good place to be two

Developing quality environments indoors and out

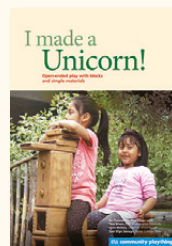
Guidance for settings providing the two-year-old entitlement.



Woodwork in the early years

A practical guide to introducing wood-work in your setting

Artist and educator Pete Moorhouse offers a practical guide to introducing woodwork in your setting.



I made a unicorn

Open-ended play with blocks and simple materials

When free to experiment with the simplest materials, children find ways to express and develop their thoughts in imaginative play.



Learning outdoors

Building a solid foundation through nature

This booklet details the pedagogy behind outdoor learning and its importance for every setting.



The irresistible classroom

Getting the learning environment right in Reception and Key Stage 1

The child does the learning. The teacher facilitates that learning. The environment must support them both. How can Reception and Key Stage 1 classrooms inspire education?



Outdoor environments

Developing outdoor learning spaces

All about designing quality outdoor learning spaces for children in your setting.



DVD: Foundations

The value of Unit block play

Instructive video illustrating the value of block play.



DVD: The Nursery Gym

in action at Pen Green

Highlights the importance of physical activity and positive risk-taking for young children.



Play and learning blog

Join us in observing how children discover, develop and learn through play. Sign up at: communityplaythings.co.uk/blog

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