



# PLAY OUTDOORS

## TIPS & ADVICE

### DR. DEBRA HARWOOD

Provides some tips and advice for playing outdoors with young children. These ideas have been compiled from many research queries of outdoor play in various contexts across Canada and internationally.

### WHERE DO I START?

- Do a quick check-in - what are your feelings about being in the outdoors with the children?
- What assumptions are you making? List your concerns & talk to your co-workers.
- What do you know or not know about outdoor play?
- Be honest about how you feel as your attitude will determine the success of outdoor play for both you and the children!

### FANCY EQUIPMENT IS NOT REQUIRED!

- One of the great advantages of the outdoors is the endless possibilities for play!
- Do a site survey of your outdoor play spaces & start imagining the possibilities.
- What affordances are possible?
- Outdoor play invites different kinds of play that are important for children.
- Ask the children for their thoughts too!
- Outdoor play can happen anywhere & anytime & fancy equipment is not necessary.
- Often sticks, pinecones, grass, clouds, or an open field will spark children's imaginations & discoveries.



### HOW MUCH TIME IS IDEAL IN THE OUTDOORS?

#### LET'S FLIP CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Amount of time the average spends outdoors in unstructured play is 4 to 7 minutes per day

- Children are indoors &/or in front a screen for many hours per day! And although there isn't a definite answer on how many hours children should be outdoors, we do know from research that children benefit from regular and repeated outdoor play
- Children who play outside are smarter, happier, more attentive, and less anxious.
- Most experts say spend "as much time as you possibly can" in the outdoors with children.

#### RETHINK RULES & PRACTICES

Time to dig in & think about approaches!

- This is your chance to rethink everything that you do.
- Ask questions of your environment, materials, and rules.
- How am I recognizing children as competent, capable, and curious?
- If you have a favourite activity, rethink it for the outdoors!
- Math, music, art, stories, eating, nap time and so much more have real benefits for children when delivered outdoors.

#### Outdoor play is safe!

- Often educators are worried about children's safety outdoors or parents' concerns about risk, messy play, etc.
- Outdoor play is safe! And you can help parents, yourself and other educators learn about the benefits of risky play in the outdoors by using the [Outside Play toolkit](#)

#### FIND OUT MORE

Find support from networks & resources

- [Outdoor Play Canada](#) has amazing free resources
- [Play Outdoors Magazine](#) is also full of stories & ideas by Canadian educators.
- Check out [Brock ECE program's Pinterest boards](#) for lots of DIY ideas