

# Outdoor Learning Tips

Taking students outside may seem daunting. The tips below have been designed to make heading outside easier.

Before you head outside, work with students to establish some outdoor learning guidelines. For example:

- Always stay in sight or earshot of your teacher so they don't have to yell.
- Listen to the warnings about muddy paths or low-hanging branches.
- Work in pairs or small groups.
- Have a clear time-frame for completing your task (the teacher can give students alerts such as "15 minutes left").
- Before starting, take a moment to allow your body to transition to an outdoor setting.
- When heading outside we will spend one or two minutes just sitting and listening to nature or observing the nature around us. This will help our bodies and minds adjust to being outdoors and will help us focus on our learning tasks.



You could have your guidelines fixed inside student workbooks or in a group workspace where students can easily refer to them.

Some other tips that could help your time outside with students include:

- **Set expectations before going outside** – Understanding what is happening and why will help students relax. Ensuring that all students are aware of what is expected of them and of the guidelines to outdoor learning will make the transition to outdoor learning much easier for all.
- **Be prepared** – What essentials will you need outside? Consider hats, sunscreen, warm clothes, a First Aid kit, full water bottles, camera etc.
- **Watch the weather** – The weather affects our ability to learn in multiple ways. Wet, windy or wild weather will affect attention spans so adjust your plans accordingly. Likewise, avoid standing with your back to the sun when talking to students: they will be squinting to see you and probably missing important information in the process.
- **Keep it simple** – Some students can find it hard to listen to someone talking for a long period of time, especially outside. If long stretches of talking are necessary, consider breaking it up between indoor and outdoor time and have a clear plan about what you will do outdoors when you get there.
- **Bring it together at the beginning and the end** – Being outside has the risk of feeling dispersed. Consider bringing all the students together in a circle (or another shape/format) at the beginning of the lesson and at the end of the lesson. This is a good way of holding everyone's attention at once (and will hopefully prevent you from having to say what you need to say more than once).
- **Set up a base** – Designate an area as your base. Tell students by the time you count back from 10 they should all be back on base ready to listen to the next set of instructions.

- **Bugs alert!** – Give the students a warning that there are insects outdoors. Some fly. Some crawl. Some bite. Students should try to respect them and not fear them (although make sure you know if any of your students are allergic to bees, ants, or wasps.)
- **Be flexible, and focus on teachable moments** – Be aware that students are making discoveries of their own and may get distracted from what you intend to teach. Use a range of thinking tools and discussion techniques to engage students in different ways.

