



# Autumn Outdoor Learning Activities

The temperature is dropping and the nights are drawing in. Leaves are falling from the trees and there is a smell of bonfires in the air. Autumn is a fantastic season for learning opportunities. Here are some great ideas to try with your little ones this autumn. Just remember to wrap up warm – no one will feel like exploring with frozen fingers!

Find a laurel hedge and collect some of the yellow leaves from the ground beneath to try some magic writing. Use a small stick to write some words or a sentence onto the leaf. You won't be able to see the writing at first, but if you place the leaf in a warm place (between your hands or under your arm), after a few minutes, the writing will be revealed!

Visit your local park or woodland and play in the fallen leaves. Have fun picking them up and throwing them, kicking them around, and hiding inside them (beware of hard surfaces or the risk of hidden animal faeces). Bring a selection of leaves home and sort them according to colour, shape or size. Do leaf rubbings; either onto paper using a crayon or by placing silver foil over the leaf and rubbing carefully with a finger.

If you have a tree or bush in your garden, dress it up by tying on strips of brightly coloured fabric or strips you have cut from plastic carrier bags. Try winding wool around the branches or the trunk. On a windy day, this can look really effective. Remember to always be mindful of pets and wildlife, and remove anything that may be a risk to them.

Make fat balls by mixing birdseed with lard or vegetable shortening. Either mould into balls or place into the net bags that supermarkets use for fruit. Poke a piece of string into the fat ball and chill in the fridge until hard, then hang up outside (out of the reach of greedy cats and dogs!) for the birds to eat.

Once the birds start coming to your garden, find a bird book and identify the birds you can see. Maybe you could create a tally chart to show the number of each species you have seen. Research what different birds eat and how they prefer to feed and talk about how you can help to encourage more varieties of birds (maybe by providing food on the ground as well as hanging up).

On a windy day, it's great to get out and blow bubbles. Make bubble mixture by mixing washing-up liquid with water (about 4 tbsp. to a cup of water). To make a bubble wand, try using a slotted spoon, cookie cutters or a funnel. Older children could try bending a wire into different shapes and investigating whether a square wand blows square bubbles!

Talk about harvest and the work that farmers do. Go to a local farm which encourages visitors; or a farm shop and discuss where our food comes from. Buy some flour and yeast and bake your own bread.

Collect natural materials such as twigs, leaves, conkers, berries, cones and pebbles and use them to create a picture (either on the ground outside or inside on a piece of paper). Photograph the final images and print to make some lovely art for your walls.

Take an old sheet, a piece of canvas or tarpaulin, and some ropes or string. Find your nearest woodland area and build a den. Alternatively, build the den in your garden. Staplers, pegs or clips are useful for attaching cloth to make doors and corridors.