

WILD IN THE PARK

NATURE CONNECTION: Stick Play

Wild in the Park's outdoor learning specialist, Katie Mills has created a series of short films packed with fun, and inspiring activities to connect with nature whilst at home or taking exercise outside. This worksheet provides supporting information for teachers, parents and guardians, including safety information, fun facts, teaching tips, activities and games - we hope you enjoy!

WRITTEN BY

Katie Mills

Katie Mills is a passionate nature connector, speaker, National Park City Ranger, Forest School Leader and Forest Bathing Guide. In 2018, she founded Forest & Family, a social enterprise promoting nature connection for children and families. She designs and delivers a wide range of outdoor learning programmes for schools, businesses, green space custodians and cultural organisations such as Alexandra Palace.



Wild in the Park...

Wild In The Park enables children and young people to access leading outdoor learning facilitators and environmental specialists to become responsible park users and to treasure community spaces and resources. More information about the programme including other resources available for download can be found on our website www.alexandrapalace.com



Overview

This session introduces children to the wonders of trees, the 'wood wide web' and three easy stick based play and learning activities. Sticks are arguably the world's earliest known and greatest toy. Sticks are plentiful, free, have infinite uses and no batteries required.

Whether capturing a walk by making a Journey Stick or delighting everyone with a Magic Stick at home or playing the 'What Am I?' guessing game the children will have hours of fun using these three simple and easy activities, and all you need is a stick!

Journey Sticks

Journey Sticks help children to hone their observations skills of nature and investigate natural materials. They are a great way to explore parks, developing a curiosity about their surroundings, wildlife, nature and plants.

To make a Journey Stick encourage children to find natural objects whilst out walking, such as leaves, feathers and pine cones. As they walk and collect each interesting item tie them to a stick using wool or string. This stick will become a record of their journey – a Journey Stick!

Resources

Wool or string cut into medium lengths or elastic bands. Small to medium sized stick.

Safety

- Always supervise young children with sticks. Make sure sticks are away from eyes and faces and carried safely, pointed down with thumb over the pointy end.
- Children should find a stick that is no longer than their arm.
- Scan the outdoor area for any hazards before starting.
- Any object that doesn't pose a danger or risk can be used, discuss with your child not touching anything that could hurt them e.g. glass, litter, sharp objects.

Tips

- There is no right or wrong way to make a Journey Stick – each stick is an individual creation.
- Add further interest or depth to the activity by suggesting they find objects that represent different things, people or different emotions.

Finally ask the children to talk about their Journey Stick. Why did they choose certain objects? What do they like about them? Where did they find the objects? And so on. Each stick will be a unique record of someone's journey, and help children to talk about and recall their trip. It is always surprising to see what 'nature treasures' children find, and how much they remember of their walk.

Location

Anywhere where you can sit comfortably, indoors or outside.

- Supervise young children with materials that pose risk of strangulation e.g. wool and string.
- Please follow the 'no pick, no lick rule': Do not let children put fingers or found objects in their mouths and discourage them from picking or breaking anything that is growing.
- Always ensure that children wash hands after playing outside and with natural materials, especially before eating.
- Never leave string or wool outdoors as they can harm local wildlife.



Magic Sticks

Learning Opportunities

- Creativity
- Fine motor skills (knot tying, winding, scissor use)
- Resourcefulness
- Imagination
- Language and communication
- Decision Making
- Patience

Resources

- Mixture of different coloured wool, string or ribbon
- Scissors
- Somewhere comfortable to sit
- Optional: natural objects and paint can be used to decorate e.g. leaves, feathers, pine cones or flowers

Location

- Find your stick outside then make the Magic Stick at home.



How to make a Magic Stick

Magic Sticks are a super easy to make and are surprisingly satisfying for all ages. The process of creating your own magic stick can be very calming and therapeutic - often it is adults who enjoy their Magic Sticks the most! Choosing a good stick is key so take time to choose a stick if you can. Finally, decorate the Magic Stick using a mixture of different coloured and textured wool, string, paint and natural materials.

Step 1: Choose a stick from the ground, about arms length.

Step 2: Encourage children to collect magical things, such as natural items like feathers, and attach them to the stick using wool, string or double-sided tape. Each object is chosen for their magical powers.

Step 3: Write a magic incantation or rhyme that is unique to each stick.

Step 4: And the stick is now ready to cast magic spells by inventing unique wand gestures and finally making contact with the ground – think Harry Potter!

Safety

- Always supervise young children with sticks and scissors. Make sure sticks are away from eyes and faces and carried safely, pointed down with thumb over the pointy end.
- Any object that doesn't pose a danger or risk can be added to your stick.
- Supervise young children with materials that pose risk of strangulation e.g. wool and string.
- Always wash hands after playing outside and with natural materials and before eating.
- Follow the 'no pick, no lick rule': Do not put fingers or found objects in mouths and do not pick or break anything that is growing.
- When gathering materials outside scan the area for any hazards and teach children not to touch anything that could hurt them e.g. glass, sharp objects.
- Never leave string or wool outside as it can harm local wildlife.

Tips

- There is no right or wrong way to make a Magic Stick – each stick is an individual creation.
- Using different coloured wool or string adds interest and some colour therapy.
- Discuss what magic powers your stick could have or who it could have or who it could belong to.
- Use Magic sticks to encourage and support imaginative play.



Stick Game – ‘What Am I?’

Learning Opportunities

- Imagination
- Role play and acting
- Teamwork
- Taking turns
- Language and vocabulary
- Communication
- Confidence
- Decision making
- Resourcefulness
- Patience

Resources

- Just a stick!

Location

- Inside or outside.

How to play ‘What Am I?’

A stick can become or used for 101 different things! ‘What Am I?’ is a guessing game for all ages and is a fantastic way to build children’s confidence and harness their imagination. All you need is two or more people to play and a stick!

The game involves using a stick to represent something and without using words each player takes turns to act out what object or thing their stick represents. Finally asking the other team players – What Am I? (hence, the name of the

game!). The aim is for your audience to guess what your stick is. It is a great game for families to play together and can be played anywhere outdoors or at home in your living room.

Safety

- Always supervise young children with sticks. Make sure sticks are away from eyes and faces and carried safely, pointed down with thumb over the pointy end.
- Always wash hands after playing outside and with natural materials, and before eating.
- Please follow the ‘no pick, no lick rule’: Do not let children put fingers or found objects in their mouths and discourage them from picking or breaking anything that is growing.

Tips

- You may need to help young children with ideas or acting out by playing in pairs.
- Listing all the things a stick could represent before you begin can help children to get started by giving them some ideas.
- Try creating your own picture cards to use when playing.
- Using a timer makes the game more exciting and challenging.
- For ideas think of different household objects, sports, professions, animals, tools, musical instruments, etc.

