



Ways to Support Your Child's Learning Outdoors

Many families find themselves spending more time outside during the summer. Children often have their go-to activities when playing outdoors. Some may enjoy exploring nature around them, while others may like playing with toys. Here are a few ways to make your child's outdoor play a rich learning opportunity.

Notice what your child finds interesting. Children often enjoy climbing, running, swinging, jumping, splashing in puddles, kicking and throwing balls when outside. When you see what your child's interests are, join in with him. Your child is more likely to learn and stay longer in activities when he is interested in them and when you are involved.

Let your child explore what he hears and sees around him. The sounds and sights of nature can be very exciting for some children. Take the time to talk about the things around him, whether it be a cardinal singing in a tree, a squirrel rustling around in the woods, or flowers and leaves blowing in the wind. Use this as an opportunity to help your child learn about new and interesting things in nature.

Wait and see what your child begins to do on her own. Your child tends to do many different things when playing outside. She may slide several times, then play in the sandbox before beginning to pick wildflowers. Follow your child's lead and give her opportunities to be more independent with her choices in play. This provides greater chances for children to develop.

Help your child learn new things. If you notice your child trying to climb up on a large rock, step across creek stones, or jump into a swimming hole, rather than saying "don't climb on that" or

"don't do that," focus on positive and safe chances to explore using phrases like "You love to splash, let's try it in this puddle over here!"