

**Tool 2.4**

Giving nature time

CLARITY Competence Area:

Nurturing connection to oneself, others and nature

GreenComp Competence Area:

Embracing Complexity in Sustainability

Why use this tool?

The "Give Nature Time" tool is designed to encourage individuals and groups to deepen their connection with the natural world through immersive and mindful experiences. This tool is an invitation to slow down, reconnect, and appreciate the profound impact that nature can have on our lives. By integrating activities like "Nature Adventures," participants engage in unstructured outdoor play, reflection, and exploration, allowing them to experience the myriad benefits of nature firsthand.

Activity 2.4.3

Nature adventures

Overview

"Nature Adventures" is a flexible outdoor activity that invites learners to explore, observe, and connect with nature through various guided or self-directed experiences. Whether it is a hike through the woods, canoeing on a calm lake, camping under the stars, or engaging in free play in a natural setting, "Nature Adventures" encourages a deeper connection to oneself, others, and the natural world. The activity is designed to enhance a sense of wonder and awe by immersing learners in diverse natural environments while building resilience by overcoming challenges that they face in nature. By emphasizing flexibility, exploration, and reflection, educators can provide meaningful experiences that cater to the diverse needs and interests of learners. Each adventure becomes a unique opportunity for growth, learning, and connection.

Curriculum linkage

Physical Education & Health, Fieldtrips and excursions, Science and Geography.

Competences built

Self-reflection, interconnectedness thinking, nature connectedness, adaptability and emotional literacy and regulation.

BASIC INFO

**Age range:**

6+

Duration:

60 minutes or more (can be extended or shortened as needed)

Group size:

Flexible, depending on the location and number of facilitators

Level of difficulty:

Basic

Materials/space required:

Comfortable clothing and shoes for outdoor exploration.

Notebooks, pens, and optionally, nature guides or field books.

First aid kit

Location:

Outdoors

Engagement of external stakeholders:

Depends on the adventure



Prep

Make sure you know the location in advance. It is critical to pre-visit the place and have a risk-assessment for the activity.

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher:

You may need to have previous experience in the different activities or a local guide or expert with you.

Steps in the activity

1. Before you go
2. In nature



Learners setting up their tents to spend a night camping under the stars

Photo by Carmelo Zamora, REAL School Budapest

Whether it's a hike through the woods, canoeing on a calm lake, camping under the stars, or engaging in free play in a natural setting, there is a series of steps that can help you to get started:

Step 1: Before you go

1. Set the intention. Define the purpose and intention of the nature adventure. Are you promoting mindfulness, fostering teamwork and problem solving or nature connection? Clarifying the goal helps tailor the experience to the needs and interests of the group, whether they are children, adults, or a mixed group.
2. Choose the right environment. Select an environment that suits your intention and the group's needs. This could be a forest, beach, park, river, or even an urban green space. The setting will shape the type of activities possible, like hiking in a forest, canoeing on a lake, or free play in a meadow.
3. Create a safe and inclusive atmosphere. This involves preparing for challenges like weather, terrain, and group dynamics.
4. Consider offering varied engagement opportunities. Not every learner will engage with nature in the same way. Some may prefer active movement like hiking or canoeing, while others may find joy in stillness, like meditating under a tree or sketching a landscape. Offer different types of activities to cater to diverse interests and comfort levels, and let learners choose what feels right for them.



5. Prepare to adapt the activity based on the group's energy, weather conditions, or unexpected discoveries. Flexibility allows for spontaneous learning moments—such as encountering wildlife or observing a unique natural phenomenon—that can lead to deeper engagement and learning.



Pictures of a nature adventure in which the group embarked on a canoe expedition along the Danube

Photo by Carmelo Zamora, REAL School Budapest

Step 2: In nature

1. Communicate safety guidelines and establish boundaries, such as designated areas for exploration and behavior expectations to protect learners and the environment.
2. Encourage learners to explore and discover at their own pace. Encourage curiosity and let learners choose their path—whether it's following a trail, wading into a stream, climbing a hill, or simply sitting quietly and observing. The emphasis is on direct experience with nature, fostering a sense of wonder and personal connection.
3. Encourage learners to experience nature with a sense of playfulness, whether it is through building a shelter, playing nature-based games, or creating art with found objects. Joy and play are powerful tools for connection and learning.
4. Lead with Curiosity. Ask open-ended questions and encourage learners to ask their own. "What do you notice here? What surprises you? How does this place make you feel?"
5. After exploration, bring the group together for reflection and sharing. This could be through group discussions, storytelling, journaling, or creative expression like drawing or poetry. Encourage learners to reflect on what they noticed, how they felt, and what they learned about themselves, others, and the natural world.





Dos and don'ts

Adaptations:

We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how you want to be treated, but how they want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

References

This activity was created by REAL School Budapest.

Louv, R. (2008). *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. <https://richardlouv.com/books/last-child/> (Highlights the benefits of unstructured play in nature for cognitive and emotional development)

Ewert, A., & Yoshino, A. (2011). The influence of short-term adventure-based experiences on levels of resilience. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 11(1), 35–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2010.532986>

Gray, P. (2011). The Decline of Play and the Rise of Psychopathology in Children and Adolescents. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ985541.pdf> (Emphasizes the importance of free play in natural settings for mental health and resilience)



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