

Ideas for Outdoor Play

Painting with Water

Painting with water is a simple and fun activity for children of all ages. It can be done in a small or large space. Just provide the children with cups of water and a paint brush. Allow them the opportunity to paint on the walls or the ground, on trees or play structures. The water will evaporate quickly depending on the weather and will lead to a great discussion about evaporation.

Uninterrupted Play

Uninterrupted play is just what it claims to be, play without any interruptions or distractions. Children need opportunities to just play without props like climbing structures or pretend kitchens. With time, children will begin to use their imagination and play.

Who can do this or that?

This is an opportunity to do some physical activity and creative movement with children. Have contests to see who can jump the farthest or jump the most times. See who can pat their head and rub their belly. Allow the children to think of contests they would like to participate in- like, “who can crawl the fastest or do the most somersaults?”

Bean Bag Activities

A bean bag can be made simply by filling the toe of a sock with uncooked rice or unpopped corn kernels and stitched closed. Children can toss beanbags to one another, balance them on their head while they walk, or even use them to learn how to juggle. Bean bags are wonderful tools that can be used in many ways.

Person to Person

This is a game where one child is partnered with another. Someone without a partner is the caller. The caller gives a direction to the children like *elbow to elbow* and the children follow the direction with their partner, touching their elbow to their partners. After several directions, the caller says *person to person*, which is the cue to change partners.

Tending a Worm Bin

A worm bin is a great way to both compost fruit and vegetable scraps and have fun learning about the science of worms. Build a Worm Bin in a large tub with a lid. Drill some holes in the sides and bottom for ventilation. Fill the bin about half way with some soil, shredded paper, peat moss and red wiggler worms. Keep the bin moist and throw in vegetable or fruit scraps weekly to keep the worms busy. Keep the lid on and keep the bin out of direct sunlight. Eventually the worms will eat up all the scraps and create some great worm castings to use in the garden.

Chime Out

Spend some time while on a walk or in the backyard hunting for items like sticks, pinecones, shells, or metal objects that have been thrown out like washers or nails. Have the children tie yarn or string to the items and then to the stick. Hang the stick in a tree and listen as the breeze makes music.

Mini Obstacle Course

Set up a simple obstacle course for infants and young toddlers by creating piles of interesting things like leaves, stones, or branches. Allow the child to navigate their way to these piles by toddling or crawling. Be sure to always be close by with encouraging words.

TYPES OF OUTDOOR PLAY

FREE PLAY		WALKS		ORGANIZED PLAY		PROJECT PLAY	
Sensory	Play	Field Trips	Wandering	Physical Fitness	Games	Garden	Art
Painting with Water*	Uninterrupted Play*	To the Library	After-a-rain walk	Who can do this or that?*	Duck, Duck, Goose	Planting a Container Garden	Sidewalk Chalk Mural
Sand and Buckets	Uninterrupted Play	To the Park	Garden walk	Tumbling	Freeze Tag	Tending to a Worm Bin*	Nature Collage
Scoop and Pour Bird Seed	Uninterrupted Play	To the Bakery	Windy Day walk	Animal Walking	Simon Says	Hunting for Insects	Paper Airplanes
Sprinklers	Uninterrupted Play	To the Fire Station	Light and Shadow walk*	Bean Bag Activities*	Person to Person*	Bird Watching	Chime Out*

Most of these activities can be used in programs with small or limited spaces. Adaptations can be made so that the activities are appropriate for toddlers or children with special needs.

Outdoor Activities for Infants

SENSORY						WANDERING	
Sand Play	Crawling thru Cardboard Boxes	Listening to Wind Chimes	Smelling Flowers	Crawling on Grass	Watching Tree Mobiles	Stroller Walks	Mini Obstacle Course*

*Instructions for these activities are included with this packet.