

# Encouraging children to enjoy the great outdoors

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Links:

[TED talk: how to get children to fall in love with nature](#)

[The Wild Project: 42 things to do this summer](#)

[50 things to do before you are 11<sup>3/4</sup>](#) (National Trust)

[Article from The Guardian newspaper](#)

Other ideas:

- Show your children that you are enthusiastic about the great outdoors and that you care about nature (enthusiasm is infectious)
- Notice and talk about wildlife close to home (eg birds, bees and butterflies) and wildlife that's further afield
- Observe trees throughout the year. Winter can be an especially good time to look at deciduous trees – the trunk and branch structures are revealed in all their intricacy, once the leaves have fallen
- Learn together about the science behind 'Autumn colours' – it's fascinating
- Look up to and ponder the night sky – the moon, stars and planets
- Plan trips and holidays based on outdoor experiences
- Try some double-decker bus rides through the countryside or along the coast
- Trips to a woodland or to the seaside are magical and the stuff of childhood (simple pleasures are often the best)
- Arrange playdates outdoors, if possible
- Aim to eat outdoors when you can (breakfast outside, picnic, alfresco supper, etc)

- Try growing edible plants – on window sills or on the patio if you don't have a garden. You may strike lucky and have access to a community allotment – if so, potatoes, beans, salad crops and herbs are easy and fun to grow
- Growing sunflowers is fun and rewarding
- Go litter-picking (it's fun and satisfying, and it's often a chance to meet like-minded people in your neighbourhood)
- Go blackberrying (in late summer/early Autumn)
- Visit a 'Pick your own' farm
- Visit a farmers' market
- Visit a City Farm
- Use 'tech' if your children are 'tech' minded – [Geo-caching](#) might tempt your screen-absorbed youngsters outdoors
- [OS Locate](#) and OS Maps, and [What3Words](#) are also useful apps for data and tech-savvy youngsters
- [OS GetOutside](#) is a free app with loads of inspiration and ideas for connecting with nature and enjoying the outdoors
- Photography is a great way to capture moments and memories, and to share the photos with others
- How about some citizen science? A garden bird survey, for example, or recording daily temperatures outdoors (in the shade)
- Feeding garden wildlife - birds and hedgehogs - and ensuring they have water are important tasks that children tend to enjoy and can relate to
- Feeding ducks at the local pond or lake is also fun (though don't feed them bread, which is bad for them – you can buy duck feed at pet shops or try feeding peas)
- If you are giving gifts – how about making them relevant to nature and the outdoors? The RSPB, The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and the Natural History Museum have on-line shops (to give but two example)
- Sign up to an animal sponsorship scheme, eg via the World Wildlife Fund for Nature
- Borrow books from the library on nature and environmental issues

- Consider a subscription to a publication such as National Geographic Kids, BBC Wildlife or The Week Junior (perhaps share with another family)
- Suggest outdoor learning ideas with your children's school – eg growing veg. The Royal Horticultural Society has a campaign for [school gardening](#)



- Learn together about key people in the outdoors and environmental movement – what motivates them? What sets them apart from the crowd?
- If you can, get your children involved with outdoor-focused youth organisations such as the Scouts, the Girl Guides, the Cadets and the Youth Hostels Association.

Above all, don't ever give up. My son loves his screen-time, but this does include watching wildlife programmes, which we both enjoy. We especially love BBC 1's *Spy in the Wild* – it's wonderful and hilarious at the same time.

In terms of 'hands on' activities in the great outdoors, I am part of a community allotment. Every time I visit the allotment I invite my son to join me. Almost always he says 'no' because he's enjoying a computer game or watching a favourite show on TV. Then, on that rare occasion he will surprise me and say 'yes', and he's become completely immersed in the planting, watering and, at the end of the growing season, the harvesting of the freshest, tastiest fruit and veg imaginable. It's an elemental, priceless experience for a young person.

The OS Locate and Maps apps have also helped us to enjoy venturing outdoors together.