

Outdoor Learning Ideas for KS2

Using Play Equipment for Curriculum-Based Learning

Outdoor learning provides exciting opportunities for children to engage with the curriculum in a dynamic and memorable way.

Through **active outdoor learning**, educators can encourage **creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, and practical problem-solving skills**.

This collection of ideas provides KS2 teachers with a starting point for incorporating outdoor learning opportunities into various curriculum subjects.



English

Sentence Race

🕒 30 minutes 👥 Group work

Pupils work in teams to race between stations (e.g., climbing frame, slides) to find hidden words and form sentences. Each sentence must fulfil certain criteria (e.g. must contain a fronted adverbial, an expanded noun phrase, etc.)



Persuasive Writing

🕒 50 minutes
👥 Whole class

Take pupils out to use the playground equipment and encourage them to record their observations and feelings as they use it.

They can then use this vocabulary to write an advertisement promoting a piece of play equipment, using rich descriptions and persuasive language, demonstrating an understanding of the audience and purpose.

Playful Poetry

🕒 30+ minutes 👥 Whole class

Use various pieces of playground equipment to inspire poetry, focusing on similes and metaphors. For example, 'As I cross the balance beam, I am a leopard in the tree.'

Playground Performers

🕒 30+ minutes 👥 Group work

Act out scenes from a book or create their own short plays using different playground equipment and structures as sets and stages.

Mathematics

Measurement Challenge

🕒 50 minutes 🧑 Whole class

Pupils measure the height of slides, the length of swings, or the perimeter of play areas. They can compare measurements and convert between different units of measure.

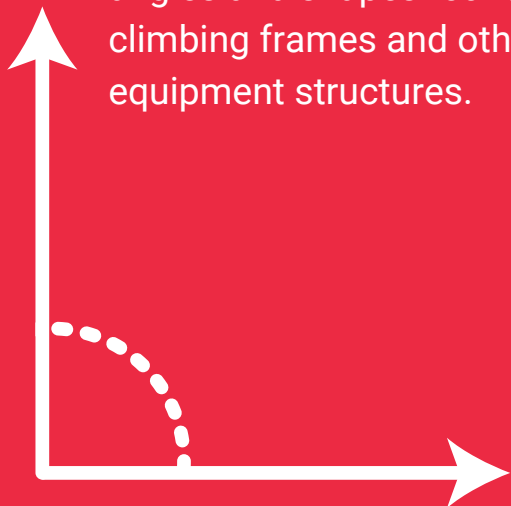


Angles and Shapes Hunt

🕒 30+ minutes

🧑 Whole class

As part of a geometry unit, pupils can identify and classify angles and shapes found in climbing frames and other play equipment structures.



Coordinates Game

🕒 30 minutes

🧑 Whole class

Pupils can play a 'Battleships' style game in pairs, to learn about coordinates. They can use grids which represent the outdoor area, then mark items of equipment or certain features (e.g. a pond) on their grids, as the 'ships'.

Science

Shadow Science

🕒 10 minutes 👥 Group work

Children can observe shadows made by play equipment and investigate how shadows are formed. They can measure shadow lengths at different times of the day to identify patterns in the way that the size of shadows changes.

The Heart

🕒 20+ minutes 👥 Whole class

Pupils measure their heart rate before and after aerobic activities on playground equipment. Activities could include climbing, running circuits or using monkey bars to explore how exercise affects heart rate.

Friction Investigation

🕒 50 minutes 👥 Group work

Design a fair test to compare different surfaces in the playground and on playground equipment to determine which one slows objects down the most.

Forces and Gravity

🕒 50 minutes 👥 Whole class

Have pupils create paper spinners or parachutes and drop them from high playground structures, such as climbing walls, nets, or frames. Discuss how gravity pulls objects down while air resistance slows their descent.

The Water Cycle

🕒 30+ minutes 👥 Group work

Pupils can fill a jar with soil, add water, cover the top with cling film, and secure it with a rubber band, then place the jar in sunlight. They can observe how the water evaporates, condenses on the inside of the jar, and eventually returns to the soil as precipitation.

Geography

Sourcing and Producing Materials

- 🕒 50 minutes
- 👥 Whole class

Let pupils investigate the materials used to build various items of playground equipment. They can then research how these materials are sourced and produced, and the impact this has on the environment and the climate.

Weather Observation

- 🕒 20+ minutes
- 👥 Group work

Pupils can measure, record and present temperature, wind direction, and rainfall, as part of their learning about the physical geography of the local area.

Map Reading

- 🕒 30+ minutes
- 👥 Whole class

Pupils can create a scaled map of the playground and add the eight compass points.



Art and Design



Observational Drawing

🕒 30+ minutes 🧑 Whole class

Pupils choose a piece of playground equipment and create detailed sketches, focusing on perspective, shading, and textures. They could also sketch classmates using the equipment to practise drawing movement.

Photography and Composition

🕒 50 minutes 🧑 Group work

Pupils use tablets or cameras to capture creative shots of playground equipment from different angles. They can explore framing, symmetry, and abstract perspectives by photographing shadows, reflections, or patterns.

Textured Rubbings

🕒 30+ minutes
🧑 Whole class

Use wax crayons and paper to take rubbings of different playground surfaces (wood, metal, rubber) to create textured collage artwork.

Kinetic Sculptures

🕒 50+ minutes
🧑 Whole class

Study artists like Alexander Calder, then design and build small mobiles inspired by the shapes and movement of playground equipment.

Design and Technology



Material Investigation

🕒 30+ minutes 🧑 Whole class

Explore, describe and compare the functional and aesthetic properties of materials used in different play equipment.

Playground Equipment

🕒 30+ minutes 🧑 Whole class

Pupils design a piece of playground equipment, considering the function, safety, accessibility and aesthetics. They should consider the materials that would be used to create the equipment and explain the reasons for their choices.

Playground Model

🕒 50 minutes 🧑 Group work

Pupils design and build a miniature playground structure, applying their understanding of how to strengthen, stiffen and reinforce more complex structures.



Physical Education

Relay Obstacle Course

🕒 40+ minutes

👥 Group work

Challenge pupils to work in small groups to plan a route around the school grounds, using the play equipment. They must decide which member of the group will do which section of the course. Groups could time each other to add an element of competition.

Competitive Games

🕒 30+ minutes

👥 Whole class

Use playground structures for team-based games (e.g., tag variations, when the playground equipment is a 'safe' base).

