

Outdoor Learning Ideas for KS1

Using Play Equipment for Curriculum-Based Learning

Outdoor learning is a powerful tool for engaging young children and enhancing their understanding of the world.

Taking lessons outside helps children **connect with nature**, encourages **active learning**, and provides opportunities for **creativity and exploration**.

This collection of ideas provides KS1 teachers with a starting point for incorporating outdoor learning opportunities into various curriculum subjects.



English

Storytelling and Drama

🕒 20-30 minutes 👥 Group work

Take the class outside and have pupils retell and recreate familiar stories or create their own stories using the play equipment as scenery and props.

Children can perform their stories in small groups. This helps develop speaking and listening skills, imagination, and creativity.



Writing Reviews

🕒 50 minutes

👥 Whole class

Spend time outside using the school play equipment and ask pupils what they like and dislike about it. Children write short reviews of their outdoor spaces and play equipment, practising current writing objectives.

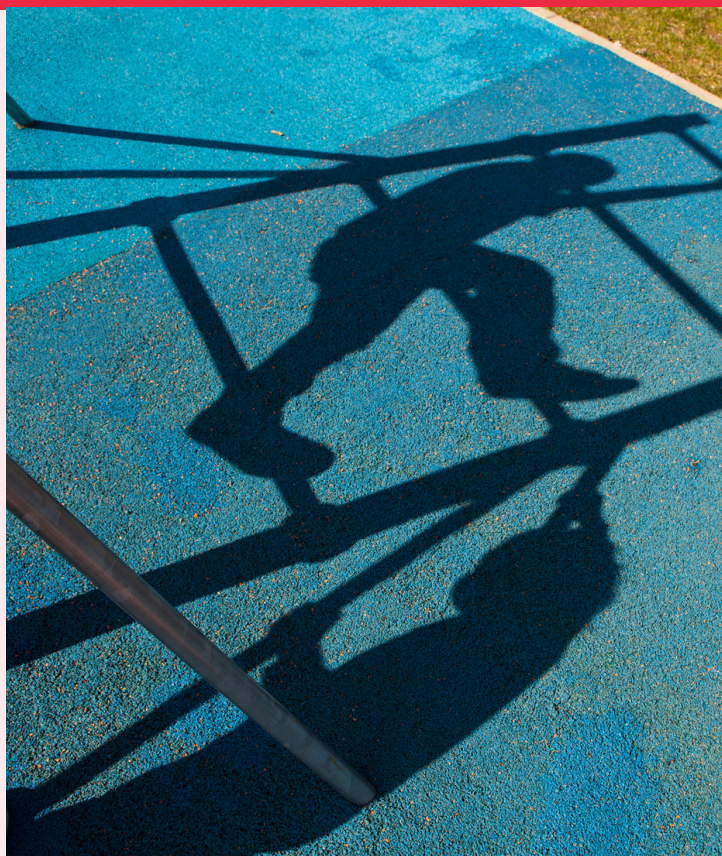
Science

Light and Shadows

🕒 10-15 minutes

👥 Group work

Take the children outside at different times on a sunny day to measure and mark the shadows made by the play equipment, using chalk or natural markers like pebbles. Discuss why the shadow length changes and link to learning about seasons and day length.



Wildlife Watching

🕒 20 minutes

👥 Group work

Use a playground shelter or play tower as a hide. Children can use binoculars and cameras to observe and capture images of their natural surroundings and the local wildlife such as birds and insects. This links to learning about living things and their habitats.

Pushes and Pulls

🕒 20 minutes

👥 Whole class

Use the playground equipment to help pupils learn about the forces of push and pull. Invite them to find as many different ways as they can to safely demonstrate these forces using various items and movements.

Mathematics

Number Hunt Activity

🕒 20 minutes 👥 Group work

Hide numbered clue cards containing number sentences around the play equipment in your outdoor space. Ask children to work out the answer to each number sentence, revealing the next clue's number.



Positional and Proportional Language

🕒 20 minutes 👥 Group work

Use the school grounds and play equipment to teach pupils positional language (on, under, behind, etc.) and proportional language (higher, further, etc.).

Ask pupils to follow instructions using this language. They could then all play on the equipment and when told to 'freeze', selected pupils can be asked to use positional and proportional language to describe where some of their peers are.

Shape Spotting

🕒 15-20 minutes

👥 Whole class

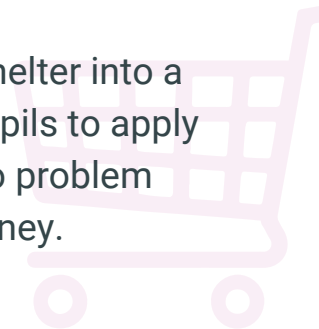
Pupils can look around the outdoor area and identify shapes in the playground, play equipment and natural environment.

Go Shopping

🕒 15-20 minutes

👥 Group work

Turn a playground shelter into a shop and support pupils to apply their number skills to problem solving involving money.



Physical Education

Crocodiles Game

🕒 10 minutes 🧑 Whole class

Ask children to travel in different ways around the outdoor space. When you call or blow a whistle, it means the crocodiles are coming and they must use the play equipment to get off the ground as fast as possible. This is a great warm-up activity at the start of a PE lesson.



Geography

Mapping the Playground

🕒 20 minutes 👥 Group work

Take a walk around the school grounds and work together to create a simple map, identifying landmarks such as trees, playground equipment, and pathways. This develops pupils' map reading, spatial awareness, and geographical terminology.



Weather Watching

🕒 10 minutes 👥 Group work

Use a playground shelter or play tower as a weather observation station. Spend time observing and recording the weather (clouds, temperature, wind direction) over a week. You could create a weather chart, as a class, using weather symbols, to record your observations.

History

Time Travel Adventure

🕒 15 minutes 👥 Group work

Encourage children to imagine they are in a different time period (e.g., prehistoric, medieval). Use the play equipment to create scenarios from significant historical events beyond living memory.

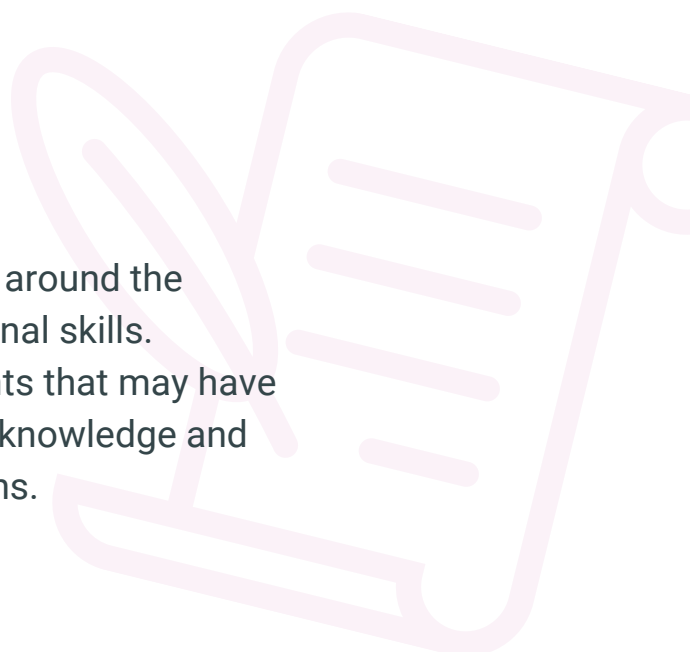
For example, pupils could imagine they are fleeing the Great Fire of London, as they travel around the apparatus, or a climbing structure could become the Titanic.



Historical Walk

🕒 30+ minutes 👥 Whole class

If possible, visit a local historical site or walk around the school grounds to develop pupils' observational skills. Discuss historical features or important events that may have happened in the area to grow their historical knowledge and encourage pupils to ask and answer questions.

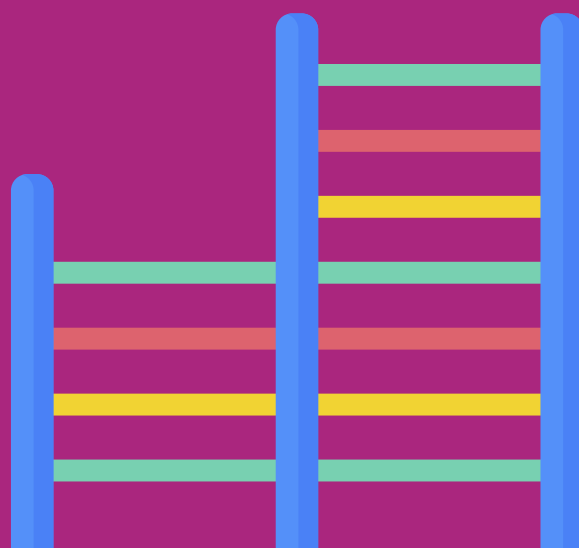


Design and Technology

Imaginative Designs

🕒 50 minutes 👥 Whole class

Ask children to use the play equipment and to consider what else they'd like to be able to do. Pupils can draw the school play equipment but modify and extend the designs considering purpose and function. Designs might include additional elements for climbing, sliding, spinning or swinging.



Playground Problem-Solvers

🕒 30 minutes 👥 Group work

Pupils explore the play area and identify a common problem (e.g., wet benches, slippery paths, lost skipping ropes). They can then design a simple product to solve the problem (such as a bench cover, a non-slip mat, or a storage hook for skipping ropes). Encourage children to draw labelled diagrams and consider appropriate materials.

Music



Rhythmic Patterns

🕒 20 minutes 👥 Whole class

Assign different playground equipment or different outdoor spaces to different sounds (e.g., tapping, clapping, stomping).

The children move around, then when told to stop, they repeat the rhythm you create using the sound assigned to that area or piece of equipment.

Exploring Different Sounds

🕒 20-30 minutes 👥 Group work

Let children experiment with tapping different parts of play structures (e.g., wooden posts, metal bars, rubber surfaces) to hear how different materials create different sounds.

Help them identify quiet, loud, high and low sounds, and fast and slow rhythms.