

LEAF Benefits and risks of being outside

**Ages:** 3 - 18**Time:** 1 - 2 hours

Purpose: To give pupils the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of being outside and how to manage any risks that may be encountered.

Pupils can then help complete a risk assessment that can be updated on an ongoing basis.

Curricular links

HWB 0-4-16a, 0-4-17a, 0-4-18a, **LGL** 0-4-02a, 0-4-04a, **LIT** 0-4-02a, 0-4-04a, 0-4-09a, **GAI** 0-4-2a, **MNU** 1-4-22a

Introduction

There are many benefits and risks associated with taking groups of pupils outdoors. This resource aims to help pupils assess the benefits and risks of going outdoors for themselves, giving them agency and responsibility for their own wellbeing. In completing the activities in this resource, pupils will be able to proactively look for risks and know how to manage them ahead of encountering them. There are three activities within this resource, which can be completed together or independently:

1. A discussion based exploration of the benefits and risks of going outside.
2. A photo based activity to plan for hazards that might be encountered when outside.
3. Age appropriate benefit / risk forms for pupils to complete.

With thanks to Lindsay Shepherd at Glashieburn Primary School, Kerstin Holm from St. Mary's Music School and Hazel Millar from Chirnside Primary School for their generous contributions to this resource.

1. The benefits and risks of going outside

Equipment needed: none.

Activity: Ask pupils to imagine that they are outside. It works well to start with an outdoor area that they are familiar with, such as your grounds or local woodland / park.

Ask pupils to describe what they can see, hear, smell and touch (you may want to ask pupils to close their eyes to help visualise this). If pupils find it difficult to visualise then you could complete this activity outside. Ask pupils what is nice about being outside. What do they like about it and enjoy about it. What would pupils feel like if they were not allowed to go outside at all? What would they miss?

Then ask pupils to think about what they don't like about being outside. What could they do to address the things they don't like? For example, if they don't like getting wet, would they feel better about going outside if they had suitable clothing?

Continue discussing the benefits and risks of going outside until all pupils have been able to share their thoughts and consider solutions to any barriers they identify.

2. Planning for hazards whilst outside

Equipment needed: print out or electronic display of potential hazard photographs (on pages 3-7 of this resource). You can add additional photographs if any pupils have specific concerns, or there are hazards specific to your area. You could also access a satellite map image of your area (e.g. from Google Maps) and use it to identify hazards in an area or on a route, for example, to your local woodland.

Activity: Show pupils the images and ask them to describe what they see.

What hazards may be encountered because of what is in each image?

What are the consequences of the hazards they have identified?

How severe are these consequences (you could label them red / amber / green, with red = severe / life threatening, amber = moderate / potential injury, green = mild / discomfort)?

How likely is it that the hazard would harm them?

What are the good parts about being outside illustrated by the image? Can a negative be turned into a positive? It is good for pupils to learn that it is ok to tolerate mild discomfort.

As an example, nettles: Discuss how pupils perceive nettles as a potential hazard. Have they been stung by a nettle before? What did it feel like? Pupils can share experiences with each other and then think about what to do to prevent stings. This hazard could be categorised as green / mild as it only causes temporary discomfort. Remember that being stung does increase resilience as pupils learn that the sting does not last forever. Pupils could be advised to know a plant before touching it. They can wear gloves if they need to touch nettles, or they can be taught how to "grab" a nettle, so it does not sting. Pupils can be advised to wear long trousers and long sleeves to avoid stings. An increase in appreciation for nettles can be inspired by discussing their value to nature, for example as food for many species of caterpillars. Pupils could also pick nettles and make nettle tea or nettle soup.

3. Completion of risk assessment

Equipment needed: print outs of the risk assessment form from pages 8-9 of this resource, appropriate to age and ability of pupils. Editable online versions are available for [Nursery/Primary](#) and [Secondary](#).

Activity: Choose an activity that you would like to risk assess with pupils. As a starting point it may be helpful to assess spending time in your usual outdoor learning area.

Go through the risk assessment form, discussing what needs to be considered when completing a risk assessment and what they think should be added to each section. Pupils may find it helpful to brainstorm the activity and create a mind map, which can then be translated into the form.

The risk assessment can be updated for each visit or for different circumstances, e.g. bad weather.

For older pupils: you may wish to discuss the following concepts before asking pupils to fill in the risk assessment form:

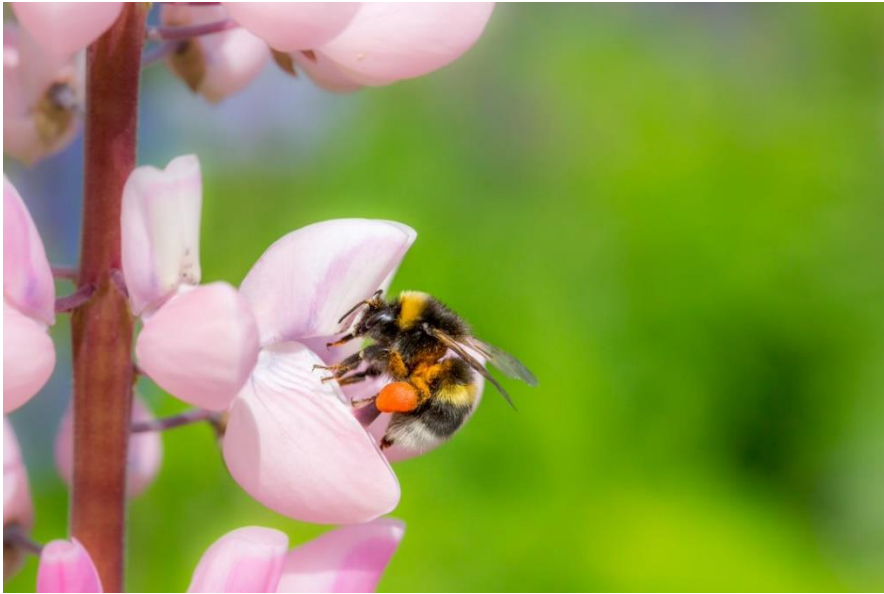
Explain the different between hazard and risk: A hazard is a source of potential harm. A risk is the likelihood of harm arising from exposure to a hazard. For example, working with fire means you are working with a source of potential harm: a hazard. The probability that you would be burned is the risk.

Discuss the need of a risk assessment: The idea behind risk assessment is that you recognize the hazard exists, evaluate the risk and decide which precautions are needed to reduce the risk.

Fill in the risk assessment: Essentially, risk assessment is the process of identifying all areas of harm which may affect people. We then determine whether this harm is likely, identify measures to be implemented to reduce the likelihood of the harm occurring where necessary and include control measures to minimise the risk.



Images – Animals



Images – Plants



Images – Water and weather



Images – Litter



Images – Traffic and transport



Risk assessment form: Nursery and Primary

Where: (location of activity)					
Who: (people taking part)					
Benefit: (good points about the activity)					
Risks: (colour code these with traffic light colours based on severity)					
Action taken to reduce risk: (before and during activity)					
Pupil's Voice (pupil's thoughts on the risks)					
Unexpected Risks (risks that crop up during the activity)					
Date and initialled					

Notes: For younger pupils, it may be helpful for the educator to complete 'Where,' 'Who,' 'Benefit,' 'Risks' and 'Action taken to reduce risk' first then discuss these with pupils. Pupils can then comment on what they think will be risky and this can be added to 'Pupil's voice.'

For older pupils, the whole form can be completed together through group discussion and collaboration.

'Unexpected risks' can be updated after repeated visits if things crop up during the activity. The form can be dated and initialled as updates are made.

Risk assessment form: Secondary

SSERC Risk Assessment (based on HSE's INDG 163 'Risk assessment - A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace')

Activity assessed	
Date of assessment	
Date of review	
School	
Department	

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4		
List significant hazards here:	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing? What further action is needed?	Actions		
			By whom?	Due date	Done