

# How to Teach Children in an Outdoor Classroom

## Ideas from *Taking FOSS Outdoors*

Students will be a bit wild and unaccustomed to learning outside. Outside typically means recess for children. With practice students will understand how to behave and how to learn while in an outdoor classroom. Expect better behavior outside with repeat experiences.

### Outdoor Classroom Rules

- Setting rules before going outside is important. Have students help decide the rules.
- Create a document with rules, call it a contract and have students sign it.
- If rules are broken, student is given a warning. Next time student is returned to classroom and taken out of nature.

### Boundaries

Define for them where they can go and what they should be doing.

### Timing

- Travel - Consider travel time when planning a lesson outside. 10 minutes to prepare, line up, and arrive in the garden depending on the distance.
- Instructions - When outside, review the rules, describe boundaries, describe the challenge and give out materials.
- Investigation time - break into pairs or groups and work on the project. Break a classroom into 3 groups with 2 more teachers/volunteers to lead the other 2 groups. Rotate groups after 20 minutes or as long as attention span. Example: 1 group does main lesson, 2nd group does weeding, 3rd group does tasting or bug hunt or watering.
- Wrap-Up - Discuss the learnings as a group to reinforce lesson.

### Materials Needed for Students

*(giving the students something to hold can help remind them of their purpose outdoors)*

Clipboards with writing utensils attached

Magnifying glasses

Measuring tape

Collection cups/vials

Sun protection - hat and sunscreen

### Teacher Materials

Shaded area for discussions

Extra clipboards, magnifiers, tapes as above

Attention signal

Tissues/paper towels/hand sanitizer

First aid kit

Cell phone

Student class list

Water

# FLOW OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The natural flow of a outdoor activity is slightly different from that of a standard indoor activity. The steps of a typical outdoor activity are listed below. This list may be helpful if you want to teach more than the handful of outdoor activities in the *Investigations Guide*, or if you want to adapt an indoor activity for schoolyard use.

1. Prepare for the outdoor activity.
  - Determine the best location to teach the activity.
  - Check the weather forecast
  - Make sure students will be dressed appropriately.
  - Prepare materials for distribution.
  - Check the site the morning of the activity.
2. Set the learning objective.
  - Present the focus question.
  - Discuss procedures.
3. Go outdoors.
  - Gather at the predetermined location.
4. Model or describe the activity.
  - Organize students.
  - Define boundaries.
  - Introduce/distribute materials.
5. Monitor the activity.
  - Check student engagement.
  - Check student recording.
  - Ask questions.
6. Share the experience.
  - Form a sharing circle to discuss experiences.
  - Share thinking.
  - Share answers to the focus question.
7. Return to class
  - Make connections to the related indoor activity.
  - Display student work and collections.