

Making the most of the great outdoors with your group of children, young people or families has so many benefits. Going outdoors provides us with a different and often bigger space than a church hall or other building would. It connects us with the natural world and gives a variety of opportunities to explore, appreciate and learn about God's creation. A number of recent studies have highlighted how disconnected people in the UK are from nature, and by contrast, others have indicated how good it makes us feel when we spend time outside.

How to go outside with your group

Many of us have experienced special moments gathered around a camp fire or walking through the woods, but week by week it can feel like too much effort to take our groups outside. Whilst it won't necessarily work for every group, there can be many benefits. One volunteer leader commented 'I think it's just simpler when we go outside!' This guide is here to help you think about what needs to be done and what the possibilities are when you take your group outdoors.

Important things to consider

- Risk assessments
- First Aid
- Parental consent/emergency contact details
- Changes in the weather (or tides, if coastal)
- If it's a public space, do you need permission? Might other people be using the space?
- Boundaries and safety: does your group know where they are allowed to go
- Hand washing and food handling
- Using natural or recyclable materials for activities, and make sure you leave the space as you found it
- When foraging/doing a scavenger hunt, only use things which have already fallen from trees. Don't pick or break bits off trees or plants
- Be aware of wildlife and try not to disturb their habitats.



Where can we go?

- Your churchyard
 - You could ask for permission to set aside some space to meet there regularly
 - You could put a temporary shelter to make it suitable for most weathers
- Does a nearby Primary School have a forest school area that you could use?
- Is there a nearby park, beach or woodland you could visit?
 - Consider toilets, accessibility and car parking
- Is there somewhere you can have a campfire or BBQ?
- Whilst it can be good to use a variety of locations, it is also helpful to have a regular place so people know where they are going and what to expect.



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What can we do?

This is not an exhaustive list of what you can do outside, but here are some starting points:

- Mini beast/bug hunt
- Exploring rock pools
- Tree walk/leaf/bark rubbing
- Nature scavenger hunt - finding things like leaves/feathers/insects/birds
- Making bee or bug hotels
- Gathering natural items for a harvest display or crafting session
- Storytelling or worship around a campfire
- Camp cooking or making 'smares
- Wide games, rounders or quick cricket games
- Litter pick or beach clean

Scan the QR code for useful links, and more advice and guidance from the Go Team

