

# Teaching Resources | Teacher Training



## All About Me | Muddy Early Years

BEE GREEN AND ONLY PRINT IF YOU HIVE TO :)

### Preparation and safety

Each season, nature will bring you the resources that you need. However, if you do not have a natural setting or lack certain natural items, try to collect these in advance of your sessions. Make a habit of going out for a walk at weekends – you'll improve your own physical and mental health, which is good for you, and you'll collect your missing items. You can also encourage parents to get collecting through your newsletters! Make your world one big healthy, Muddy community. You will get an idea of the types of resources that you need each season. The only resource that you may need to buy is air-drying clay.

Weather wise, we will provide you with ideas for all types of weather. The only time that we advise you NOT to go outside is on extremely windy days and during thunderstorms. Otherwise, there's no excuses – get yourself out there!

Always risk assess with the children present. As you enter the natural environment, spend 30 seconds talking about the dangers that the weather conditions may present, such as slippery surfaces and hot sun. If possible, offer the children a solution to any issues, such as seeking out a safe, shady area if the sun is too hot. Keep sticks low and only use stones no bigger than the palm of the children's hands. remind them to use feet first then hands when collecting from the floor and wash hands thoroughly after.

Please be aware that all guidance and resources suggested within this guide are carried out at your own risk. We stipulate that all Muddy Puddle Teacher resources and guidance must be used within the context of your own company policies, procedures, guidance, risk assessments and insurance. We do not, in any way, suggest that you follow our guidance if it does not meet the requirements of your own company policies, procedures, guidance, risk assessments or insurance. It is your responsibility to ensure that any activities or resources used are suitable for the individual needs of the children within your care, including any needs related to age, health or allergies.

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# Spring

## Busy, busy.... let's go Spring!

Get outside and enjoy the lovely springtime weather. Have a go at playing some games :

**Try a springtime Simon Says** - The teacher gives the children an instruction e.g. 'wiggle your arms in the air' but the children only respond if it's 'Simon says wiggle your arms in the air'. Make the instructions all related to body parts to encourage children to become familiar with their names, using parts of the body names that the children might be unfamiliar with e.g. ankle, wrist etc

**Ask the children to move around the outdoor area** - when the teacher shouts 'Find a friend', the children need to shake hands and say hello to whoever they are near.

**Embrace the April showers** - encourage children to splash, jump and run outside. No umbrellas needed! When the teacher shouts 'April showers', the children stop and take turns to say something about themselves. It could be just their name or, after a bit of practice, something they like to do e.g. I like to play on my bike, or a fact e.g. 'I have blue eyes'.

Ask the children to stand, or sit in pairs or small groups, and look carefully at each other. Then, take it in turns to say something polite that they have noticed about each other e.g. 'Freddie has brown eyes.... Gemma has rosy cheeks.. Encourage the children to use descriptive language.

## Springtime, Muddy measuring

Make use of body parts and embrace fun measuring using non-standard measures.

- Work with the children to try to find a stick as tall as they are/taller than they, or shorter than they are. This might need a lovely Muddy woodland walk to collect things or a bit of preparation beforehand. Share the sticks the whole group have selected., lay them down on the playground and compare - lots of opportunities to teach the language of measure, 'who is the tallest?', 'Is ..... taller than .....?', '.....is shorter than ..... but taller than .....!'
- Hug a tree! Find a friendly, Muddy tree and measure its circumference (children love grown up vocabulary!). Use a string and cut it to the right length, then compare the lengths together..
- Compare feet sizes the Muddy way - make some lovely Muddy welly prints or bare footprints then compare. Try measuring them using leaves or other natural items. The children could make a list with their names and work out how many 'stones or leaves' long their footprint is.
- Ask the children to measure a distance using their feet, e.g. from the classroom door to the sand pit. Record their results and ask an adult to have a go. Encourage lots of discussion about why the results are different. This task could also be done using the children's steps or strides.
- Set the children a measuring challenge -: draw some lines with chalk on the playground and ask the children to measure the length of the lines using body parts e.g. hand spans, hands, feet, fingers or whatever they suggest. A similar task can be done with measuring sticks, especially if you are able to do the measuring in the lovely woodlands!

**All of our paid  
subscriptions also  
include our  
accredited courses**



**New to our Muddy  
World?**

**Please find safety and  
useful information on  
our website.**

## Muddy names

Have a go at working on name writing Muddy style!

- Use chalks on the playground or on large pieces of paper. Wallpaper rolls are great.
- Try 'painting' names with water, chalk paint (squished chalk and water) or lovely runny mud.
- Mix cornflour, water and mud to make a lovely 'gloop'. Put your gloop in a tray or tuff spot. Encourage the children to write their names or initials in the gloop, using fingers or stick pencils.
- Pop flour, compost, salt or oats into a tray and give mark making a go.
- Make it sensory! Lavender works well in a smaller tray (maybe a brand new cat litter tray?) Try used coffee grounds (freely available from all the coffee chains)
- Have fun making some stretch dough. Use just water and flour to make initials or even a number to show your age.

# Summer

## Sunny, summer art

Try out some clay art - either try to find some natural clay or buy some brown or grey (not the coloured stuff!)

Children can try out making a simple sculpture of themselves. Discuss the features we need like legs, arms etc. Use the clay to make clay faces. Roll it out and, using natural clay tools and mark making equipment, make a face. It could be the childrens' own face, a friend or a friendly alien. Collect a selection of mark making 'tools', such as sticks, stones, leaves etc. Encourage the children to experiment first and share ideas about what makes suitable marks in the clay and how to make certain features.

Extend the clay work - take a fist size piece for each child on a trip to a woodland, if possible, or find a few trees in your school grounds. If all else fails, use the walls! Press on the clay to make a face sort of shape, then the children can have fun adding features. Use grass, sticks or mossy bits for hair, stones for eyes, stones for noses. Use whatever can be found.

Can the children recognise anyone from their clay face? It's lovely to 'visit' the faces a few days later to say 'hello'.

Mix some mud - experiment with different consistencies and colours, maybe adding a little food colouring or powder paint. Next try out your finger prints. Look carefully to see if you can see the patterns. This might work better if you can print on an old white bed sheet or pillow case. Ask the children to write their names next to their finger print to make a 'this is our class' piece of art to display outdoors.

Can you print with any other body parts. Try feet, hands, knuckles and elbows.

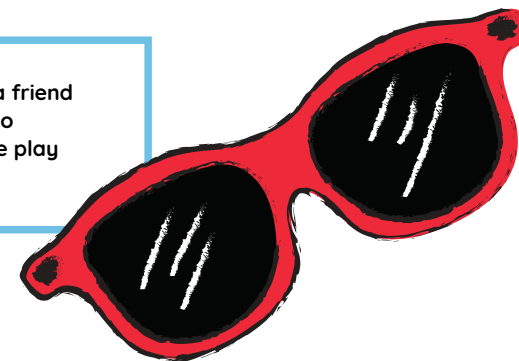
Continue with printing. Can children choose natural resources to print their initial or name?

## Chasing shadows

Have fun with shadow play - on sunny days, children are fascinated by shadows.

Play chase the shadows. In small groups, the children run around chasing their shadows and those of their friends. Stand very still and ask a friend to draw round your shadow with chalk on the playground. Try drawing round shadows onto a large roll of paper. Can the children guess who belongs to which shadow picture? Are there any features that might help us guess? Maybe hair, e.g. bunches or pony tails? Can children role play using their shadows. Experiment with gestures and movements.

Try drawing round the shadows of natural/found objects, e.g. leaves plants, twigs etc.



And then I realised  
that having  
adventures is the  
best way to learn.

## This is me!

Ask the children in a circle in a grassy area or under a tree would be perfect. Pass around a 'special' natural item e.g. a lovely shiny stone, a big pine cone or something similar. Whoever has the object is the one who can share their thoughts whilst everyone else listens. These ideas work well:

- The children say something about themselves e.g. I have 2 sisters.
- The children say their favourite food/ice cream flavour/crisp flavour - whatever comes to mind!
- The children say something that they like doing for fun.
- Each child says something nice about the person they are passing the object to e.g. 'Billy is a good friend' or 'Ben has a happy smile'
- Choose a child to sit in the middle of the circle. The special object is passed around the circle with each child paying the one in the middle a complement e.g. '.... always tries really hard' this concept might need modelling first by an adult but is fantastic for building self esteem.



# Autumn

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## Autumn loose parts rock!

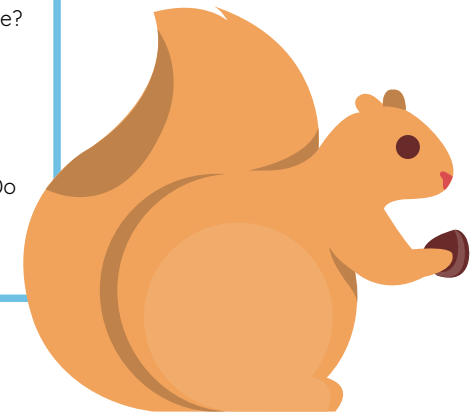
Celebrate the season by collecting a wide variety of natural loose parts. The possibilities are endless - leaves, acorns, sweet chestnuts, conkers etc. Involve the children in collecting. Once the collection is made, then work with the children to sort them into groups of similar items. Encourage discussion of the features, using descriptive language. Also talk about what we like best. Now your resources are ready try out.

- Make a face using the materials. Try to do this on a tray or large piece of card - black works well. Talk together about the choices we made with materials.
- Extend to make a person. Chat about features and body parts as they go.
- Use a fantastic story called 'Leaf Man' by Lois Ehlert with the children. Using the fantastic illustrations as inspiration, ask the children to make their own leaf man. Choose suitable leaves. Maybe go on a leaf hunt. The stickmen could be stuck down or changes around as loose parts.

## Muddy senses

Talk with the children about our senses. Why they are vital and which parts of our bodies are the sense organs? Have some fun learning about senses:

- Autumn feely bag - just use a simple drawstring bag (PE bag??). This could be done with a shoe box-sized box with a hole cut in. Secretly pop inside some items that are interesting to feel, e.g. pine cones, thick mud, moss, a shiny conker etc. Ask the children to feel without looking. Can they guess what's inside? Encourage the use of adjectives to describe.
- Smelly bags - use paper bags and pop strong smelling items inside: mint leaves, cut grass, herbs or mud! Again, talk about what it's like. Do they like the smell or not??
- Tasting - being really careful about allergies etc, it's nice to introduce the children to eating things they find : blackberries, apples, herbs and mint are all good. What do the children like/dislike? Are our ideas all the same or different??
- In your outdoor area or in a woodland spot, ask the children to close their eyes and listen. What can we hear? Do we know what is making the sounds? Do the children like the sounds?
- Investigate using a blindfold with the children. Try out working with a partner to lead them around the outdoor area.



' Anyone who thinks  
fallen leaves are dead  
has never watched  
them dancing ion a  
windy day.  
Shira Jamir

## Stick Man, oh Stick Man...

Stickman, written by Julia Donaldson, is a perfect Autumn classic to share. Talk with the children about Stick Man's feelings as the story progresses. Why is he sad or lonely? Do we ever feel that way? What can we do to feel better?

Families - the story features the concept of 'family'. Talk together about how that is for all of us with different families. Discuss examples of different types of family e.g. single parent, step families, extended families etc.

Show the children a selection of sticks of different sizes (the longest should only be about 15 cm) Ask the children to select sticks that would represent members of their family - long sticks for the adults and smaller ones for children and babies. Once the children have done this, work in pairs to share their 'stick family' ideas. Who is who etc

# Winter

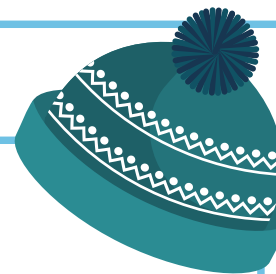
## It's cold out here!

Talk about feeling cold with the children. Compare with being indoors or warmer weather. What happens when we rub our hands together quickly? Think about jumping around to warm our feet  
Pick up pieces of snow and ice - how does it feel and what happens to the ice in our warm hands?

## Winter wonderland

If we are lucky enough to get some snow and freezing weather, seize the moment and enjoy it!

- Catch snowflakes on your face - how many can you count?
- Talk about our cold weather clothes - why do we need gloves, thick socks, scarves and hats?
- Walk, run, jump, slide and skate in the snow!
- Compare our footprints - look for differences / similarities. Compare sizes of prints in the snow. There are lots of opportunities to discuss which are the biggest, smallest etc. Can we order our footprints by size?
- Try out snow angels - lie down in the snow and move your arms up and down in the snow. When you get up, it looks like an angel. Compare the sizes afterwards. Can we work out which snow angel belongs to child?
- Make snowmen, snow women, snow children and snow animals. What can the children choose to add as features? Talk about needing ears, hair etc What natural resources can we use to add to our snow sculptures?
- Make your own icy masterpieces. Find some containers e.g. plant pots or up cycled yogurt pots, or recycled foil containers. Fill them with small natural resources e.g. berries (carefully checked and supervised!) tiny leaves etc. Try adding some mud and tiny stones. Then top up with water and leave out overnight or pop in your freezer. It's so exciting the next day to reveal the lovely ice blocks and cubes. Compare how different they all are. Encourage the children to chat together about how they look and the materials they chose.

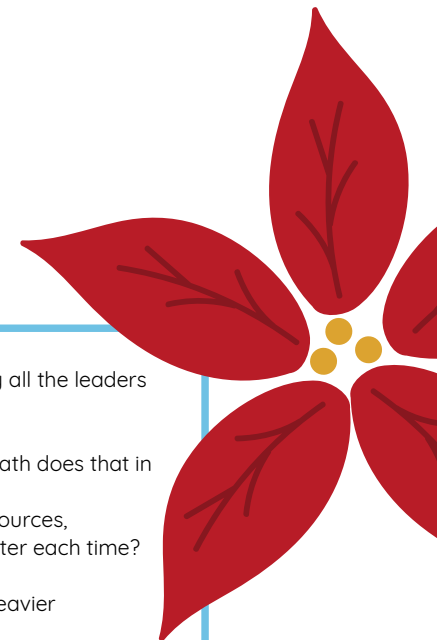


## Brrrr - let's get moving

Keep warm outside in the colder months by keeping moving.

- Play follow my leader - it's extra fun in snowy or wet weather. Work in pairs or small groups. Can the children copy all the leaders movements? Encourage jumping, spinning, crouching etc.
- Make a class or group conga, tailing all around your outdoor area.
- Look at your breath in the cold, especially after moving around. Can the children be dragons? Explain why our breath does that in the cold.
- Make a Muddy obstacle course. Use equipment that you have e.g. skipping ropes, hoops, outdoor construction resources, beanbags etc. The children will love a competitive element so time them. Can they beat their own time and get faster each time? Work in teams to make changes to the course - which parts are the most popular?
- After lots of rushing, around ask the children to stop. Discuss changes in our bodies after exercise: feeling warm, heavier breathing. Show the children how to feel their pulse by just putting a gentle finger on their wrists.

' When there's snow  
on the ground I like  
to pretend I'm  
walking on clouds.'



# All About Me

## Home Learning Activities

There are only 18  
summers in  
childhood.....  
how will you make  
this one count?

### How can you inspire your child to engage more with outdoor learning?

- Play jumping, running, skipping games.
- Practice name or initial writing with your child. Use a stick in sand or mud.
- Embrace the weather and go outside - if it's cold get wrapped up. Children don't notice cold hands! Play in snow, rain, wind.
- Try to go for a walk - your local park, woodland or even around your garden. Talk about your senses - what can you hear, see, smell. Think about freshly cut grass, birdsong, sunsets, buds and shoots
- Have a go at flying a kite.



**“To us, family means putting your arms around each other and being there.” -Barbara Bush**