

Forest School Lesson Structure

A Forest School lesson typically follows a child-led, play-based approach, allowing for flexibility and adaptation based on the children's interests and the natural environment.

While not rigidly structured like traditional lessons, a general framework can include arrival, exploration, activity time, reflection, and departure.

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

1. Arrival and Welcome:

- **Establishing boundaries:**

The session begins by setting clear boundaries and expectations for behaviour and safety within the designated Forest School area, often involving the use of boundary markers.

- **Familiar routines:**

A consistent routine, such as a "treasure tree" where children find an item to introduce the session, helps build familiarity and comfort, especially for younger children.

- **Warm-up activities:**

Brief activities, like nature-based games or exploration, help children transition into the forest environment and prepare for the main part of the session.

2. Exploration and Discovery:

- **Child-led exploration:**

This is a key aspect of Forest School, where children are encouraged to explore the natural environment at their own pace, following their interests and curiosity.

- **Encouraging observation:**

Children might be prompted to observe details in the environment, such as different types of trees, leaves, or animal tracks, fostering a deeper connection with nature.

- **Adapting to the environment:**

Leaders may introduce activities based on what they observe the children engaging with, such as building dens, creating natural art, or investigating minibeasts.

3. Focused Activities:

- **Flexible activity time:**

This is a time for more focused activities, which can be child-led or guided by the leader, depending on the needs and interests of the group.

- **Tool use and skills development:**

If appropriate for the age group and skill level, children might be introduced to tools like saws or knives for whittling or fire-building (with appropriate supervision).

- **Nature-based crafts and projects:**

Children can create natural sculptures, build shelters, or engage in other projects using materials found in the forest.

4. Reflection and Review:

- **Sharing experiences:**

Children can share their experiences, discoveries, and creations from the session, fostering communication and social interaction.

- **Connecting with the learning:**

The leader can help children reflect on what they learned, how they felt, and what they enjoyed during the session.

- **Transition to departure:**

A final activity or game can help prepare children for leaving the Forest School area.

5. Departure:

- **Return to familiar routines:**

Children may participate in a closing activity or routine to signal the end of the session, such as packing up materials or gathering in a circle.

- **Safe exit:**

Ensuring a safe and orderly departure from the Forest School area is important.

Important Considerations:

- **Regularity and duration:**

Forest School sessions are typically held regularly (e.g., weekly) over an extended period (e.g., a term or more) to allow for deeper engagement with the environment.

- **Adaptability:**

The structure of each session is flexible and adapts to the specific group of children, their interests, and the natural environment.

- **Holistic development:**

Forest School aims to promote holistic development, encompassing physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth through play and exploration.