Suitable clothing and footwear for the weather conditions.
COLD - All in one suits can be purchased - these keep out the cold and wet.
• Hats keep in the body heat.
• Wellingtons
• A flask with a warm drink
HOT - Sun cream, hat, comfortable footwear, cotton clothing.
• Flags or markers for boundaries
• First Aid kit
• Tarpaulin - for shelter (rain/sun)
• Hand washing equipment

Write a generic risk assessment for the activities you intend to do. If in doubt ask a Forest School leader to come to your school and help you to set this up and choose a site. You can amend this to reflect the weather conditions, activities, etc.

Each time you go out these are what you should be looking for:
Mark out the area with flags, high visibility tape or fluorescent tape. Try to keep the area to a reasonable size - this can be increased as the children become used to being outside.

If the area is used by the public find a quieter area not walked through.

Walk over the area to check for broken bottles, dog mess, rabbit holes, low branches, litter, plants -(nettles, fungi, berries), etc. Teach the children about these hazards over time.

Follow the Dragon
Select a dragon - an adult to start with!
Line up one behind the other
Follow and copy the actions of the dragon - a fast walk with stops and turns along the way, including the following:
• running on the spot to escape another dragon
• jumping high over a river
• dragon noise to scare the other dragon
• shh!
• crawl on the ground

Try to make these energetic on colder days. It can also be played to bring the group together or to keep warm.

Animal Enclosure
Think of a creature and keep it a secret.
When ready become your creature and see if anyone can guess what you are......

Have animal races.....
Who can jump the highest, furthest?........
Who is the sliniest?
Who can wag their tail?
Roar the loudest...

Try animal tricks...
• stand on one leg
• stand the tallest
• this is a good activity to introduce some yoga moves for children. (cat, lion, downward dog..)

As a group hold the parachute:
• Throw a handful of leaves onto the parachute or tarpaulin and see if the group can shake them off
• Call out two names from the group - they have to swap places (it's best to decide which way round they will go first - to avoid collisions).
• Shout out a colour from the parachute - eg. red, let go of the parachute and run around it until you get to your starting point.
• Sit under and ON the parachute - and see what patterns you can make with the canopy.
Early Years Forest Activities

Feeding Time:

Object: To collect a ‘worm’ to feed your family!
Skills: Teamwork, colours, tying a knot.

Preparation: Tie short lengths of wool to branches, trees, stones, etc. Put into small groups each group select a colour of wool and a ‘home’ or ‘nest’. Collect a stick about the length of one arm. Either as a group or individually find the ‘worms’ in the forest and tie to the stick. Older children could have a balancing tree to cross or a crawl under log to add to the difficulty. Make it more difficult by using green, brown or stone coloured wool.

The ULTIMATE feeding time game!!

What do animals eat?
Find out what ‘real’ animals eat - each small group could work with a helper and find out by asking questions. (“Does anyone here have a rabbit? What does it eat?”) or use a knowledge card or book.
This is a good time to discuss plants like nettles (what happens if you touch them?), fungi, berries, etc.
As a group try to find as much food as possible (try to be gentle on the worms!) Look for pine cones, nuts, leaves, etc. Or invent an imaginary animal and collect food for it.

Kitchen Corner.
You will find that this activity is a big hit with all groups.

Skills: Communication, mixing and stirring, cutting (this is a great way of learning how to use a pair of paper scissors), weighing, measuring.
Preparation: Collect old saucepans, etc. These could be kept under a shelter or in a storeroom. If you think there may not be enough soil have a few bags ready. Also, have some containers of water available.
• Build their own kitchen area with logs.
• Share out the ‘cooking’ equipment fairly.
• Start collecting the ingredients or Have the ‘shopping area’ ready - you might want to have money (e.g., pine cones) and charge them for soil, water, leaves, etc. Someone in the group may want to be the shopkeeper.
• Start ‘cooking’ -

Extras:
• Invite someone to dinner
• Have some paper plates to serve up the dinner
• Make cakes - with cake trays and silicone cases
• Mix in herbs or other essences to add aroma
• Have a set of scales to weight the ingredients
• Garden herbs and essences make it smell good.
• Make fairy potions
• Dragon grub

Risk Assessment
additions:
check for low lying branches - especially at eye level.

Kit:
a few balls of wool - varying colours.
Cut or tear off lengths of wool and tie to branches of trees.

Time: 10 - 15 minutes.
(This can be made more difficult by using more ‘natural’ shades of wool and would take longer to complete).

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Kit:
A box of old saucepans, frying pans, jugs, wooden spoons, stirring implements, kitchen knife and fork.
Measuring cups
Bag of sterilized soil

Time:
As long as they are interested - in fact you might have to tear them away!
**Shhhhh**

Sleeping dragons.
Choose someone to be a sleeping dragon and sit in a big circle around him or her. The dragon closes their eyes (or wears a blindfold) and listens. You point to someone in the circle and see if they can creep up on the dragon. This encourages the children to sit quietly and is good for calming down after more rowdy activities.

Variations:
- Place a piece of treasure (a stick, stone, etc) next to the dragon and see if they can capture it.
- Play this in an area with lots of fallen leaves. This makes it very difficult to collect the treasure.
- Sitting on a parachute also makes it difficult.
- Try to roll or crawl along to get the treasure.
- Have two or three people from the circle creeping in.
- A fun one for hot days............ ~The dragon has a fine mist plant spray, with a limited amount of water in it. When they hear someone close they can spray. Limiting the amount of water makes them more careful!

**Make some NOISE.**

Conclude your session with a sing song or ‘forest’ made band activity. This brings the group together and ends the activity on a joyful note.

Make your own instruments.... some suggestions:
- Two sticks rubbed or hit together.
- Leaves rustling
- Use the saucepans and frying pans from the mud pie activity and a stick to beat out a rhythm.
- Use a cup and stones to make a shaker.
- Clapping warms up cold hands

Sing songs with actions - ‘If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands’, etc.
- Singing on the way back to your home base will keep everyone together, active and interested. Try to learn a new song each time.
Early Years Forest Activities

Worm’s eye view
What’s it like to be a worm, snail, hedgehog or an insect that lives on the forest floor?

• crawl or slither across the ground. What does it feel like, look like, smell like or sound like?

• what would you eat?
• do you make a sound?

Follow up ideas.
• make a model
• draw a picture
• use a digital camera to take photographs. You could use these in the classroom to do further activities.
• build a small house for your model
• introduce words like shelter - what does it mean? Why do we need shelter? Who are what are we sheltering from?

Fun activities - but messy!
Having an all in one waterproof play suit and wearing old clothes underneath prevents any problems with damage to clothing. (See Muddyfaces.com if you wish to purchase equipment).

• Jumping in puddles
• Draw a target on a tree or make a ring of stones and make some mud balls to throw at it.
• Make a mud slide
• Muddy footsteps - make a trail and see if everyone can follow it by stepping into the same footprint
• Handprints in the mud
• crawling through long grass
• Follow the leader through long grass.

Artistic Activities

• Clear a small area on the forest floor and **draw a picture** with a stick. Or use a muddy patch to draw on.

• **Draw faces** and decorate with stones, grass, leaves, twigs...

• **Read a short dragon, animal story and draw your own creature.** Or sculpt one out of mud or make your own play dough. This could be linked to the kitchen corner activity.
  Ingredients:
  1/2 cup salt
  1/2 cup water
  1 cup flour
  food dye
  (Try to take this away with you to make sure dogs or other wildlife don’t eat it, there is too much salt in it). It’s a great present to take home and encourages them to be caring and gentle.

• **pine cone bird feeders** - rub cold lard into a pine cone and then roll in bird seed. Hang these in the forest.

• **memory sticks** - find a short stick. Use some of the wool from the ‘bird feeding game’. Learn how to tie a knot, or bow or just wrap around the wool to make a pattern. You can develop this into an activity diary. For example, if you did the bird feeding time activity you could wrap a few feathers around the stick and add some play dough. Encourage the children to take this home and it reminds them what they have done during the day.

• **make a boat** big enough to hold a few people (or the whole group). The leader could read a story or poem about pirates or sailing. This could also be a castle, magic kingdom or fairy den.

• balancing - if there is a suitable branch lying on the ground see if they can walk across it. Try to help each other by holding hands, one on each side at first.

Wednesday, 4 September 13