

# Outdoor Time

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It's **OUTDOOR TIME**,  
fresh-air fun time!





**Hmmm**, what should we wear?

Is it sunny,  
rainy, or windy  
out there?



# Outdoor Time Tips for Parents & Caregivers

**Create a routine.** Get ready. Toddlers love spending time outside—if only getting them out the door was easy! Young children will feel the excitement of changing locations but may get frustrated by all the preparation needed. What can you do to help these transitions go more smoothly? Keep outdoor playthings in one handy, familiar place. Before heading there, make sure children have gone to the bathroom, had a snack if needed, and are dressed for outdoors. Make getting-ready time fun by singing or talking about what children may see and do outdoors.

Also be ready to transition back indoors. Tell children when playtime is winding down. Ask them to be sure they have their toys to put away and their outdoor “finds” to bring in. Help form good habits once inside, too: hang coats, wash hands, get a drink of water. Consistency is key as you transition back to indoor learning and fun.

**Get back to nature.** Free play is essential to growing bodies and minds. Toddlers thrive on playing in open spaces where they can run, *run*, RUN and use their muscles in ways they simply can't indoors. Outside, young children can move at different speeds in different ways—uphill, downhill, climbing, rolling. It's a treat for the senses and boosts toddlers' sense of independence, too.

Free play also involves quieter activities. Whether the outdoor space is small or large, urban or rural, children will find birds, bugs, plant life, and other wonders of nature. Having the unstructured time to examine a pinecone, track the crawling of a caterpillar, or gather leaves into a pile will delight young children while it supports their growth and well-being.

**Get messy.** Toddlers love snow and puddle play, sprinkler fun, seed planting, dirt digging, sandcastle building, and worm watching. Spend time on the ground with little ones, experiencing the natural world at their level. Toddlers can enjoy collecting outdoor treasures like leaves, rocks, and feathers. Easy nature-based crafts include making leaf prints, gluing seeds to make a picture or design, or creating a mobile using a stick, pinecones, and yarn.

**Get the facts.** According to SHAPE, the Society of Health and Physical Educators, toddlers need plenty of movement for good health. SHAPE recommends at least 30 minutes of adult-led physical activity per day, at least 60 minutes—and up to several hours—of unstructured physical activity per day, and avoiding inactivity for more than 60 minutes at a time unless a child is sleeping.

A big plus is that more outdoor time means less screen time. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) suggests that toddlers use screens no more than 1 hour per day for video-chatting or to enjoy high-quality programming. That leaves plenty of hours for fresh-air fun!



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