

Q&A HOW PARENTS AND EDUCATORS CAN MAKE OUTDOOR PLAY A SAFE AND ENRICHING LEARNING EXPERIENCE.



FOR PARENTS

Q How can I ensure that my child is safe when he is outdoors?

Playing in outdoor spaces allows children to learn how to take risks, practise persistence and build resilience. Parents and other adults may worry and impose restrictions in the interests of safety. No play is completely risk-free. It is important for us to help our children learn how to take and manage risks while staying safe.

How to play safe:

1. **Check playground equipment for hazards** such as sharp edges, rusty parts and protrusions such as nails and screws.
2. **Use age-appropriate equipment.** Children of different age groups have different levels of gross motor abilities. Playground spaces with spring rockers, small slides and low swings are better suited for younger ones. Climbing ropes, vertical ladders and balance beams are more suitable for older children with better coordination skills.
3. **Use safety gear to reduce the risk of injuries.** Be sure that children wear helmets, elbow and knee guards when riding a bicycle or a scooter.
4. **Wear appropriate clothing and footwear.** Avoid too-loose clothes as they hinder movement. Be sure that children wear closed-toe shoes to support gross motor activities such as running and jumping.
5. **Apply insect repellent** when exploring the outdoors.

Q How can I integrate children's learning with the outdoors?

Outdoor spaces such as gardens, parks, beaches and playgrounds can enhance and enrich indoor learning. Children have endless opportunities to explore, discover and learn about the world around them. Here are some ways:

Thinking and Problem-solving Skills

> **Support numeracy.** Use non-standard units of measurement such as raffia string to measure the circumference of different trees. You can also use paper clips to measure sizes of leaves. Create a graph based on the different measurements.

Language and Communication Skills

> **Expand vocabulary.** Nature is full of textures for children to touch, feel and describe, in objects such as grass, leaves, and flowers. Introduce words like 'soft', 'rough', and even 'serrated'.

Creative and Aesthetics

> **Nurture creativity.** Encourage children to write a short verse about leaves. Children can also create a card or a collage with the leaves they have picked from the ground.

Environmental Awareness

> **Care for the environment.** Read books about conservation, and about trees. Take a walk in the park and talk about why trees are important part of our environment and their usefulness. Encourage them to share what they can do to care for trees and the environment.



FOR EDUCATORS



DR G KAVERI is a lecturer in the department of early childhood education at the Singapore University of Social Sciences and works with pre-service and in-service early childhood educators. Her research interests include global childhoods and partnership with families. She is a mother of two and believes in engaging in reflective parenting practices.



ELSIE CHUA has been the centre leader of Living Sanctuary Kindergarten with 22 years of experience in the Early Childhood sector. She is also an ECDA Fellow who is passionate about developing innovative curriculum. She believes that the outdoor learning environment is rich with natural resources that can support young children's holistic development.