

# Activity 2



## Mini Shelters



*Playing outside, getting muddy, climbing trees and making daisy chains are simple pleasures many of today's children are missing out on.*

*Play England*

## **How to 'be' in the woods**

A woodland is different from anywhere else. It requires a certain way of moving, or seeing, or listening to make the most of it. We all knew how to do it when we were children. And with a bit of practice we soon get the hang of it again.

Being in healthy, abundant woodland also means understanding that there is a code of practice required in order to make sure they stay that way. By having a positive experience the children develop an appreciation of this valuable resource and an understanding of the need to look after it.

## **Mini Shelters**

This activity is great fun and a fabulous way to introduce children to the woodland environment. It can take as long as you like – some groups even spend a whole day on this, joining shelters with paths and creating mini settlements!

The children can work individually, in pairs or groups to design and build tiny shelters to deal with a variety of problems such as floods, predators and protection from the elements.

A good place to start is with the purpose of a shelter; that is to provide protection from the elements – sun, rain, wind, temperature, snow. The children should be able to give examples of 'shelters' that they know about such as their own homes. What other kind of shelters do they know? If the shelter is for a creature like a mouse for example, you can add in the need to be able to store food and have protection from predators. The children might be able to tell you what other creatures would want to eat a mouse – owls, cats etc and this can lead into discussions around the food chain or build on learning already done in science. You could explain that all the materials needed to make a shelter can be found here, in the woodland. They can use tree trunks and stumps to site their shelters or start on open ground.



Discussions about habitat could be explored with questions like ‘what do you think lives in this woodland?’ Of course there are the plants and trees, but also a variety of smaller creatures – rodents and minibeasts for whom the woodland is a home.

Discussions can form part of an introduction, but the children will want to get ‘hands-on’ as soon as possible! The design brief for their mini shelter can be as open as you wish, or could relate to specific learning already covered. Some example briefs are given here but the list is not exhaustive and some great ideas come from the children themselves.

Design and build a mini shelter that would:

- ❖ offer protection from a flood covering the woodland floor
- ❖ provide a home for a mouse
- ❖ offer protection, warmth and comfort in the event of bad weather
- ❖ offer protection from a marauding tribe of mini warriors
- ❖ win a mini shelter design competition
- ❖ accommodate 4 mini people as a house with different rooms
- ❖ be a home for a small toy animal (as in some of the photos here)

They could also be provided with ideas for a type of mini shelter to build:

- ❖ fort
- ❖ house
- ❖ tree house
- ❖ single storey dwelling
- ❖ multi-storey dwelling

As the name suggests, mini shelters are small – and the children may need help in deciding what materials are appropriate. The children use and develop their skills in foraging for materials and choosing the right site, as well as experimenting with construction techniques. Everyone could have a guided tour at the end and meet to talk about designs and the problems they encountered as well as their solutions. They could also take some photographs of their mini shelters for display or discussion back in school, or to add to a blog, or just as a record of their handiwork and the day they created shelters in the woods!





Making a free-standing 'tipi' style shelter for a toy monkey

## Getting to the woods

You will notice that Cote Ghyll Mill is almost surrounded by woodland, however there are two particularly good areas for this activity that are just a short walk from the door.

On leaving the classroom via the front door, turn right onto the road and you will see a footpath signposted on the left going up a hill. The path is quite well worn, stony and muddy in places so care should be taken. It also has a barbed wire fence running up the right hand side of it so caution here too.

Go up the path and you will reach a gate. Go through the gate and turn left. This woodland is a nice place to start – perhaps with discussions or can even be used for the whole session. Alternatively, you can continue on the path through the trees and you will eventually reach an open grassy area. (The children will see a wall at the end which is the dam on the reservoir – if they don't know the area, you could ask them what they think might be on the other side of the wall – you might be surprised at some of the answers you get!)

Walk up the right side of the grassed area until you reach the corner. Here you will see an entrance into the woodland. This woodland is great for a wide variety of activities, but is particularly good for mini shelters due to the large amount of materials lying on the forest floor. Before you go in it's always a good idea to lay down some ground rules for behavior and safety. The children should walk at all times and make them aware of some of the low branches. Tell them there's no need to pull any leaves or branches off the trees and that whatever they bring into the woodland, they should take out. Although it's fun, they shouldn't be climbing trees on this activity. Set some boundaries for the area you'd like them to work in and you're off! You can also get into a good area of woodland by continuing up the forest track from the corner where it meets the grassed area, and turning right at any one of a number of paths in. You may also see some large shelters here that have been made by other groups. Your children may want to explore these too, but check that they're safe first and that there's no dangerous litter about. This woodland is accessible to the public, and unfortunately not everyone is as vigilant with their litter disposal as they should be.

There are no toilets in the woods, but you can set your own area aside away from the working area and any water courses, and make arrangements in case someone needs to go for a 'wild wee'!

As mentioned on the planning sheet, this activity can be paired with Activity 3 'Sticks and Sounds' with a break for a picnic in-between, making for a full day out in the beautiful environment we have on our doorstep at Cote Ghyll Mill.

Re-trace your steps down along the wooded path the end of the activity to get back to Cote Ghyll Mill.



# Mini Shelters Planning Sheet, Cod Beck Woods, North Yorkshire

Age Group: Primary

Curriculum areas: Science, Literacy, Numeracy, Art, DT

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<p><b>Whole Group Input:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Briefing – safety and behaviour expectations, boundaries etc</li><li>Introduce the woodland as a habitat, learning environment and place where we can use our imagination to design and create things.</li><li>Introduce the idea of 'shelter'<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>What is a shelter?</i></li><li><i>What do we need to shelter from?</i></li><li><i>What types of shelters do the children know about?</i></li></ul></li><li>Explain that they are going to design and build mini shelters in line with the brief you have chosen (see activity information) and that it may involve teamwork, communication, designing and making skills and foraging.</li></ul>	<p>Small toy animals if required.</p>
<p><b>Activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The children work in the groups you have chosen thinking about the design brief, site and materials they will use to be successful</li><li>Encourage a cycle of PLAN-DO-REVIEW in their work by allowing time to reflect on what they are doing and make changes where necessary.</li><li>The children collect materials from within the designated area to construct mini shelters to suit the chosen purpose</li><li>Encourage them to use existing sites such as cavities in tree trunks and stumps, or allow them to make free-standing shelters.</li><li>Assist with designs or construction if necessary providing additional support to those who need it.</li><li>Encourage children to work together and share ideas.</li><li>Take photos as the construction work takes place.</li><li><i>How could we get from one shelter to another?</i></li><li>Ask questions relating to the purpose such as '<i>How are you going to make it waterproof/comfortable/camouflaged?</i>'</li><li>Ask questions about choice of materials such as '<i>Why have you chosen that moss/twig?</i>'</li><li>Ask questions about the site such as '<i>Tell me why you chose to build your shelter here?</i>'</li><li>Encourage the use of imagination too – this activity is a good vehicle for creative thinking.</li></ul>	<p>Woodland resources – twigs, branches, leaves, pine cones, moss, etc</p>

**Review:**

- Encourage the children to give a guided tour of their shelter(s). This can be formal or just allow them some time to explore – being careful not to stand on anyone's' work!
- Discuss any problems encountered, and the solutions reached.
- Look at the shelters in terms of the design brief or purpose. The children could self-assess with regard to how well they think their shelter meets the needs of the task.
- Review the skills used – *What skills did we use in making our shelters?*
- How do the children feel about their work in the woods? Explore what went well and why they have enjoyed it or found it difficult.
- *What might we have to do differently if we were making shelters for ourselves?*
- Don't forget to take any small toy animals and all other possessions with you at the end of the activity. The shelters can be left – who knows what might take up residence!

Completed shelters

Additional notes for adults:

As the activity progresses, take photos of the groups or individuals at work for future learning opportunities.

Children needing the toilet can be directed to an area of the woodland that you could designate for this purpose. It's always wise to ensure they have been to the toilet before they leave Cote Ghyll Mill.

During the activity, allow the children time for drinks and a mid-session snack.

The area of grass that you cross on the way to the woodland is ideal for a picnic and there's enough space for the children to let off steam and play some games as well. Set boundaries as the reservoir is not far away and is unfenced.

This activity could be done during a morning, followed by lunch on the grass and then moving on to Activity 3 'Sticks and Sounds'.

Risk Assessment and Management Record		Cote Ghyll Mill Educational Visits		
Establishment	<i>Cote Ghyll Mill</i>	Activity	<i>Mini Shelters (Cod Beck Reservoir Woodland)</i>	
Leader – person with overall responsibility for the whole group.		Other staff – Assistants, Parent Helpers		Ratios (suggested)
				1 adult : 6 pupils for Years 1 - 3 1 adult : 10 –15 pupils for Years 4 - 6
Identifying significant hazards – assessing the risk		Control measures – reducing the risk		
Site and its environment	Risk *		outcome	Communicate with:
1. <i>Footpaths mixed in quality – risk of trip or fall injury</i>	<b>M</b>	Only use agreed route with vigilance at discussed areas. Pupils involved in risk assessment procedure. Appropriate footwear to be worn by all participants.	L	STAFF/PARENT HELPERS/CHILDREN
2. <i>Flora and fauna – risk of sting, poison or bite</i>	<b>M</b>	Briefing about the dangers of the woodland environment. Particular attention to branches, thorn plants and nettles.	L	STAFF/PARENT HELPERS/CHILDREN
3. <i>Struck by trees, branches or other woodland materials.</i>	<b>M</b>	Briefing for all participants by group leader on dangers of using and collecting woodland materials. Group management.	L	STAFF/PARENT HELPERS/CHILDREN
4. <i>Slips, trips and falls during activity</i>	<b>M</b>	All staff and participants will be briefed to look for and to avoid trip hazards during activity. All staff and participants will be briefed not to run during activity.	L	STAFF/PARENT HELPERS/CHILDREN
<b>Group</b>				
1. <i>Large groups – risk of losing members</i>	<b>M</b>	Good ratio of adults to pupils. Participants briefed on boundaries. Regular head counts. Group remains together throughout activity.	L	STAFF/PARENT HELPERS/CHILDREN
2. <i>Behaviour of individuals – risk of disruption or accident</i>	<b>M</b>	Individuals identified and to be closely supervised by staff.	L	STAFF/PARENT HELPERS
3. <i>Group inexperienced in working in outdoors or walking in countryside areas – risk of accident</i>	<b>M</b>	Children involved in risk assessment process and clear on expectations of the visit. Also aware of suitable clothing to wear.	L	STAFF/PARENT HELPERS/CHILDREN
<b>Leader and activity arrangements</b>				
1. <i>Reliant on parent helpers – risk of poor supervision</i>	<b>M</b>	Parent helpers to be involved in risk assessment and pre-visit briefing.	L	PARENTAL HELPERS
2. <i>Area unfamiliar to group members – risk of getting lost</i>	<b>M</b>	Group management and effective briefing of participants.	L	STAFF/PARENT HELPERS

\* H = High, M = Medium, L = Low

