



## 8 SUSTAINABLE PLAY

### Why Sustainable Play?

With the increasing awareness of the importance of recycling, reusing and reducing materials it is essential for us all to play our part. Although issues such as global warming and overuse of plastics can seem far removed from the way we encourage our children and young people to play they are actually very closely linked!

Single use plastics and throwaway fashion contribute to a great deal of the unrecycled waste we produce in the UK, however they can also contribute to some amazing play ideas and fun opportunities if we give these items a 'second life'. From bottle rockets to tin-can telephones, arts and crafts and outdoor play, sustainable play encourages creativity by reusing safe everyday items. Whether you are looking for play ideas to use at home and outside or you work with children there are many benefits for the children and also the planet with sustainable play.

### Arts and Crafts

Arts and crafts have many benefits for the development of children and young people. It can greatly improve their hand-eye coordination and increase their creativity. By reusing household items like bottles and boxes it is easy to create the two fun ideas below and it is a very simple way for people to include sustainable play into daily life.

**“Recycling doesn’t just make for a better tomorrow. It makes for a better today!”**

<https://www.weareteachers.com/recycling-poster-better-today/>

### Bubble Snake Maker:

- Cut the bottom off a plastic bottle and wrap a sock round the bottom, covering the new wide hole you have just cut out.
- Make sure the sock is on tight, elastic bands or duct tape would help but not essential.
- Dip the bottom of the bottle in bubble mix, covering the sock.
- Blow into the bottle through the mouthpiece and watch a big bubble snake appear!

To make the mix: add a quarter cup of washing up liquid and a half cup of water.

### Box Robot:

- If you have some spare cardboard boxes, bottle lids, tinfoil and glue (or tape) you can spend hours making robot costumes or robot toys.
- Many children like to draw or glue cut out shapes on boxes and stick them together then by cutting out a mouth and eye holes it becomes a robot!





## Sustainable Play in a Professional Setting

If you are a professional working with children it can be beneficial to incorporate the use of sustainable play into your practice. Not only will it save money in your budget, but it can also encourage an ethos of recycling with the children and families in their own homes. Below are some examples:

### Loose parts:

Old pallets, crates, tyres, and much more can provide amazing play opportunities that help develop teamwork, social skills, imagination and resourcefulness. Curriculum outcomes can be achieved through loose parts play and because it is so open ended and non-restrictive, children with a huge variety of interests and passions can have their needs catered for. There are also many benefits in terms of building relationships with local businesses and parents/carers through donations of loose parts.

### Nature in the Playground:

A sustainable and naturally-focused playground allows children to be in touch with nature. Playing with eco-friendly and sustainable equipment can also aid learning about sustainability. For example, creating bug hotels or mini-ponds is a good way to develop your space, as well as tree planting, gardening projects and much more. There are many opportunities to turn nature into play.



## Sustainable Play Outdoors

Sustainable play also doesn't always have to be done in the house on a rainy day. There are many benefits to playing outside in nature including managing risk, connecting with new environments and simply getting some fresh air! Below are activities that are great to try outside. Part of the fun is finding the natural items and then deciding what to do with them.

### Twig Boats:

Using only a ball of string, some twigs and a leaf you can build a boat that will float on water in a puddle, small pond or even in the sink.

- Tie some thick twigs together using the string or an elastic band.
- For the mast - place a taller but thin stick in between the middle of the twigs.
- For the sail - pierce a leaf with the taller twig through the top and bottom.

### Natural Sports:

Using only a small ball (tennis ball or mini football) and lots of sticks you can build a croquet course or football goals in an open space that doesn't have sport facilities.

## Further Reading

Outdoor Learning in Curriculum for Excellence:  
<http://www.playscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/No4-Curriculum-for-Excellence.pdf>

Useful Play Ideas from Smart Play Network:  
<https://www.smartplaynetwork.org/play-ideas>

## Smart Play Network Members Support

Member you have access to telephone and email support. For more information about the topics covered in this guidance sheet, or any other queries you may have about your project, please contact us using: 0131 554 2620 or [admin@smartplaynetwork.org](mailto:admin@smartplaynetwork.org)