



50 LEARNING-INSPIRED THINGS TO DO WITH A STICK FOR EARLY YEARS

Sticks are open-ended items that encourage children to be creative, imaginative, and exist in worlds where they have full control. They can be an inventor, creator, director, engineer or scientist. Sticks offer infinite opportunities for: open ended learning; creating; role playing; hypothesizing; critiquing and imagining in many teaching contexts.

What does a child imagine when they have a stick in their hands and what stories will they create if we allow them?

This list is designed to inspire educators to explore the learning potential of a stick with their children.

THE STICK AGREEMENT

Before exploring the world of sticks discuss with your children how they should and shouldn't be used. By forming a mutual stick agreement you can empower the students to govern their play and ensure they are aware of how to keep their play environment, and the children within it, as safe as necessary. The agreement can also include how large sticks are carried and how to be respectful of the natural environment when sourcing sticks.

TRY THIS:

- Undertake one stick inspired outdoor activity each day.
- Map some of these activities into an existing term planner.
- Start or end each day with an outdoor learning activity from this list.
- Watch [The Humble Stick: The must have tool for summer](#) for some inspiration.

LEARNING OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF IDENTITY

- 1 Use a stick to write the first letter of your name in mud.
- 2 Tie a beautiful ribbon to the end of your favourite stick and use it to dance around with.
- 3 Try writing your name in the air with this ribbon on a stick.

LEARNING OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE CONNECTED WITH AND CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WORLD

- 4 Find a special stick from your natural environment and take it on an adventure with you.
- 5 Stir up silt in a pond (excursion) or muddy puddle. Notice how long it takes to settle again.
- 6 Fish a piece of rubbish out of the local creek with a long stick and put it in the bin (excursion).

- 7 Use a stick with a pointy end to pick up fallen leaves and put them in the compost or a pile.
- 8 Place a strong, straight stick next to a newly planted tomato or broad bean seedling to use for a support (as it grows, children may like to try tying the plant to the stick with twine or an old stocking)
- 9 Use a stick like a dibber to make shallow holes in the soil of your veggie patch to plant seeds.



- 10 Build a winter fairy garden with twigs, moss and found treasures.
- 11 Use a small stick to rescue an insect that has landed in water.
- 12 Make an event display with a found branch. Hang it with your creative endeavours.
- 13 Create a stick bridge (life-size or for a small creature).
- 14 Design a walking trail or pathway marked by sticks.

LEARNING OUTCOME 3: CHILDREN HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF WELLBEING

- 15 Toast marshmallows over a fire (if you don't have access to fire pretend!)
- 16 Create a Journey Stick from a walk around your outdoor playspace (collect found items and attach to your stick)
- 17 Research Totem Poles and make your own.
- 18 Create a friendship tree with a bare branch in a pot of stones. Hang it with photos of friends playing together.
- 19 Make yourself a magic wand and try it out.
- 20 Create a mobile made from sticks with natural elements that you have discovered.
- 21 Turn a stick into a stirring spoon to mix up mud soup, scented petal potions or magic potions.



- 22 Make your own musical instrument and do a performance for your friends.

LEARNING OUTCOME 4: CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT AND INVOLVED LEARNERS

- 23 Practice making marks in the soil with a stick that mean something.
- 24 Form a number or letter that you are learning with different sized sticks.
- 25 Scribe into clay with sticks of varying textures.
- 26 Copy something you've seen into sand using a stick.
- 27 Use two sticks together to pick up an object and move it to a new place.
- 28 Find a sturdy stick to use for support on a local nature walk (excursion).
- 29 Use a strong stick to dig out a track for water to run through.
- 30 Create a set of balancing scales with a stick or a seesaw-inspired measuring tool to compare the weight of natural items from your local environment.
- 31 Use lengths of bamboo and twine to build a structure.
- 32 Plays a game of pick up sticks or make your own naughts and crosses frame with sticks.
- 33 Explore the sound a stick makes on different objects.
- 34 Practice weaving a 'god's eye' with coloured wool and two sticks lashed together like a cross.
- 35 Build a twig raft and test it out in water.
- 36 Explore ways to join and fasten sticks together to create a den or cubby.
- 37 Try sanding a rough stick with sanding paper then rubbing in natural wax such as lavender wax and compare the change in texture.

- 38 Find a stick you can snap and try and break it into equal halves. Compare one half with the other.

LEARNING OUTCOME 5: CHILDREN ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS

- 39 Explore tallying or keeping score with a stick in the dirt.
- 40 Read the book Stick Man and try making your own stick person.
- 41 Read Room on the Broom (Julia Donaldson) and hunt for your own broom branch to use in your outdoor cubby or home.
- 42 Trace shapes into the mud, see if someone else can guess what shape you're making.
- 43 Draw something interesting in gravel or another rough surface with a strong stick.
- 44 Lay on the ground and see how many sticks it takes to measure around your friend's body.
- 45 See how high you can build a stick tower with a pile of sticks.
- 46 Collect several sticks and sort them by length, width, shape, colour or texture.
- 47 Sing a song and try keeping the beat with tapping sticks.
- 48 Find a stage and tell a story using a stick or make up a play.
- 49 Build a number tree with a branch standing in a pot of gravel, hang it with the number of the day/week
- 50 Pick up a stick and guess what tree it came from. Share your reasons why.

