

## Speaking and Listening Activities for outside

This video gives 3 separate sets of activities designed to get pupils comfortable with outside space and then to explore this space giving reasons to speak and listen. Please bear in mind our Key Principles when taking pupils outside. Video timings are noted next to the activity title.

### Distance and detail (Hawk and Mouse) [start of video]

These are calming, focusing activities to help your pupils learn to observe and use their eyes in different ways and talk about it with a partner. They can be run as contrasting activities, or independently.

#### Distance (Hawk)

Get your pupils to focus on an object at least 50m away. It could be a cloud, or something on the horizon, it could be manmade or natural. Some pupils might find it helpful to think of being a bird of prey, looking for food. Have your pupils give all their attention to this distant object. They need to really study it: they should look for colour, shape and movement. It doesn't matter if they know what it is or not, the importance is in the looking. As they focus on a distant object, they may notice that nearer objects fall out of focus, so be careful when you bring your pupils out of this activity. Depending on the age of the children this focusing activity can last between 10 seconds and 3 minutes. Get them to talk in pairs about what they looked at and describe it to their partner. Older pupils could also talk about the experience of studying an object so far away.

#### Detail (Mouse)

Then get each pupil to choose an object which they can study up close, but they are only going to look at it with their eyes. They need to look really closely. Some pupils might find imagining themselves as a little mouse helpful. They need to study it closely: shape, colour and movement. Then when the time is up, they need to describe it to their partner, and listen to their partner's description too.

**Resources:** Nothing specific. You may find a word bank of adjectives and adverbs useful.



## Using grass in a sensory activity [video 2.01]

This short, focused activity offers children a sensory experience, helping them relax, slowing down the heartbeat, enabling deeper breathing and calming the mind.

We often learn about habitats during our farm visits and this activity introduces children, or allows them to re-engage, with the world beneath their feet.

It can be carried out on a grassy area of your school grounds or in a local park.

- **Stand and look at a patch of grass for a short while** - ask the children what they can see. Collect their ideas - may be different shades of green, or that the grass is dotted with flowers such as buttercups, dandelions and their clocks, daisies, or celandines. On a breezy day children may describe the movement the grass makes.
- **Encourage the children to lie on their backs and feel the grass under their bodies** - you could get them to relax into the grass by tensing up each part of the body individually then letting it sink into the ground. Get the children to breathe deeply in through their nose and out through their mouths several times. They could close their eyes. After a while ask how the grass feels. They may say: scratchy, prickly, itchy, peaceful or happy.
- When you think they're ready get the children to **roll over onto their front** and pick a blade of grass. They can split it with their nails or crush it between their fingers. Ask them to smell it, some children may love the scent, others won't like it at all. Can they explain why they like or dislike the smell.
- **Finally, ask the children to put on a pair of imaginary bug glasses.** Explain that grass is an ideal habitat, or home, for many insects. Get the children to part the grass and look closely. What can they see? Depending upon the type of soil, how dry it is and the variety of grasses you may find spiders, ants, beetles, woodlice or ladybirds alongside aphids, butterflies, grasshoppers, flies and bees. Older children can be encouraged to look for longer - patience pays off!



**That's the activity** - it can be as short or as long as you wish. You may choose to use it simply as a sensory experience to help children's mental health or extend it into a bug hunt. Who doesn't like grass; when observed closely it opens up a whole new world!

**Resources:** Nothing specific. You may find a word bank of adjectives and adverbs useful.



## Draw a Tree [video 4.30]

This is a lovely activity if you are lucky enough to have trees in your school grounds, allowing children to explore shape, texture, size and compare different trees, helping them to learn to identify trees, and to find words to talk about trees.

**Bark:** get pupils to do a bark rubbing, using a wax crayon. Tape some paper onto the trunk with masking tape. Get pupils to consider words to describe the bark.

**Leaves:** pupils nip off one or two leaves with their fingertips. Turning the leaves over they will see the veins are more prominent. On top of their bark rubbing they should do a leaf rubbing to see the shape and texture of the leaves.

**Shape of tree:** stand back and look at the shape of the tree and draw that over the bark and leaf rubbings.

Then in pairs, get pupils to find words to describe the shape of their trees, and if it is appropriate, they can annotate their sketch with these words.



If you are lucky enough to have a variety of trees, you can start this activity by giving pupils a leaf from different trees and send them off to find which tree the leaves come from.

To help pupils identify their tree you can collect a leaf from each of the trees in your school grounds, finding out what they are and labelling them, then take a photocopy, scan or photo of your homemade identification chart. This way the children have just the sample of leaves that are available to them and they can match them size for size which makes identification easier.

**Resources:** trees, paper, wax crayons, tape

If you need assistance with tree identification or want further information on trees, we recommend the [Tree Key](#) by the Natural History Museum and [The Woodland Trust's Tree activities](#).

