



  
**Learning**  
in your forest

## Free downloadable lesson plan: Explore with your senses

For more learning resources from the Forestry Commission, visit [www.forestry.gov.uk/england-learning](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-learning)

The Forestry Commission (FC) looks after more than 1500 woods and forests in England – together they make up the public forest estate. Forests provide endless learning opportunities, and are great for sensory exploration. Take your class for a visit to your local FC woodland, and use all five senses to discover it.

### Curriculum links:

**EYFS:** Communication and language; Moving and handling; Understanding the world; Exploring through materials.

**Science:** Year 1 - Plants; Animals including humans; Everyday materials; Seasonal changes.  
Year 2 - Living things and their habitats.

### Before your visit:

Before you visit the forest, ask the children to draw a picture of what they think it will be like. With older children, invite them to add a sentence about each sense - what sights, sounds, smells and touches would there be in a forest?

- What do they think a tree trunk will feel like?
- Do they think they will hear any animals or birds?
- Do they think they will see people in the forest – what will those people be doing?

For a great introduction to the forest and how it is cared for by the Forestry Commission, visit [www.forestry.gov.uk/england-learning](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-learning) and look at the downloads page, where you will find an informative, child-friendly photo show, with notes and discussion questions. You will also find some useful health and safety advice for your visit.

### You will need to bring:

- Paint swatches
- Listening maps (small pieces of card with 'me' in the centre)
- Crayons
- Paper
- Water
- Pencils
- Picnic
- Yogurt pot

## Forest Lesson Plan

### Starter activity

Find an area in the forest to sit or stand in a circle. Give out the pictures and descriptions of the forest they completed at school.

- **What things are the same?**
- **What is different?**
- **Is there anything extra?**

Explain that you are going to turn the 2D picture into a 3D memory, but that they need to use their senses to explore fully to do this. If needed, invite the children to remind you what their five senses are.

## Sight – Colour matching

What colours did the children include in their original picture of a forest? Tell them they are going to investigate which colours are actually in the forest. They will need to look carefully. Get out your bag of colour swatches and hand one randomly to each child. Give them a minute to find the closest natural match to that colour. Call them back, get them to swap colours and repeat. After a few swaps, ask the children to tell you:

- Which colours were easiest to spot?
- Which were the hardest?
- Were there any colours they found that they didn't include in their original drawing?
- Were all of the colours natural or were any of them from something man-made?
- Were any of the things they picked up left behind by an animal or a human?

**Extension** – Give the children an extra minute to find their favourite forest colour. Get them to name the colour in the style of the paint swatches. A pigeon feather could be cloud grey; the bark on a tree might be forest brown.



## Smell - Woodland perfume

Stop in an open space with lots of fallen things on the ground. Give out the yogurt pots. Pour a little water into each pot and tell students they will need to find a stick for mixing. To turn the water into "woodland perfume" they need to add woodland materials and mash them up with the stick. Encourage students to keep sniffing their perfume and tweak it by adding new materials. At the end, get them to make a perfume trail (by tipping the perfume onto the ground) for a woodland animal to sniff when they are gone.

**Extension** – Discuss why forest animals need to use their sense of smell – e.g. to find food or to communicate (e.g. by marking territory).

**Extension** – Discuss how real perfume and other smelly products can be made using tree leaves, sap, flowers and seeds e.g. pine toilet cleaner, coconut bubble bath.



## Touch - Hug a tree

Encourage children to find a tree to hug.

- What does the bark feel like?
- Is it rough or smooth?
- Hard or soft?
- Warm or cold?
- Wet or dry?
- Can they see any patterns on the bark?
- Are there spots, cracks, stripes or lumps?

After hugging the tree, use crayons and paper to do a bark rubbing to record the interesting patterns that they felt.

**Hint** – use the side of the crayons.

**Extension** – Touch another tree – does it feel the same or different? Does the bark of smaller trees feel different to bigger trees?

**Extension** – Ask children to write texture words onto their bark rubbing to help them remember what each pattern felt like.



## Taste - Woodland picnic

Have a picnic outdoors! Find a sheltered or sunny place (depending on the weather!) and tuck in. Once everyone has eaten their lunch, ask if anyone's food came from a tree. Fruit bars, orange juice, bananas, chocolate, tea and coffee are all good ones to get children (and adults) thinking about where their lunch came from!

**Extension** - Discuss how not all trees can grow in the UK because of the weather, e.g. citrus fruit and banana trees cannot survive our cold winters.

**Extension** - Discuss what trees need to grow, e.g. soil, water, air, sunlight.

## Sound – Listening map

Stand in a circle and demonstrate how to listen really carefully, like a deer would in the forest. Explain that deer have bigger ears than us and that we can make our ears bigger by cupping our hands behind our ears. Stand with eyes closed, feet still and no talking, and just listen.

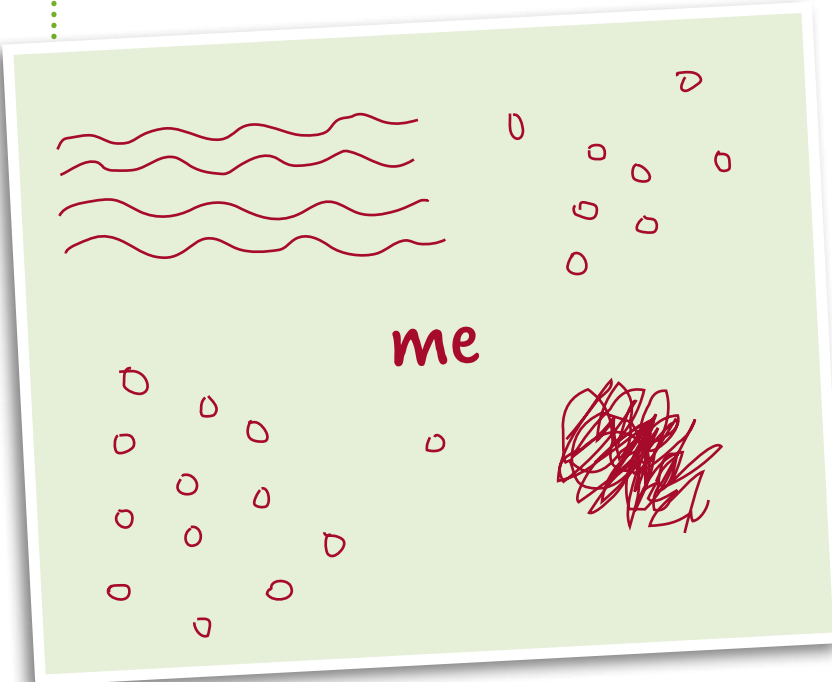
- What can they hear?
- Birds singing?
- Machinery and chainsaws in the distance?
- Rain dripping?
- Wind blowing?
- People walking and talking?



Discuss what the different noises mean and which direction they are coming from.

**Extension** - Children could even create a map of sounds with their own ears at the centre of the map! Give everyone a blank piece of card (or one with 'me' or 'ears' at the centre). Stand still and listen for a minute and ask children to draw or write symbols or words to represent what they hear in front, behind and above them.

In the map opposite, the wavy lines represented the wind in the trees above, and the scribble was the sound of an engine (maybe a chainsaw) away to the right. The circles were the sound of rain falling on the ground all around.



**Extension** – Discuss why forest animals need to have good hearing – e.g. to listen for predators.

## Follow up work - back at school

Use creative writing to record your 3D memory of the forest. Younger children could finish simple sentences like:

**In the forest I saw..**  
**In the forest I heard...**

Older children could write a detailed description. Invite them to write it to an alien who has never seen a forest on earth before. Tell children to make sure they include descriptions using all of their senses.

### Some simple questions to discuss:

**Did you see any people in the forest?**

**What were they doing?**

**What activities do you think people could do in the forest?**

Note: people can do all sorts of activities in the forest e.g. cycling, walking, playing, having a picnic.

**Did you see or hear any animals in the forest?**

Note: you might have heard birds such as woodpeckers, or seen a squirrel.

**If you didn't see any animals, why do you think that was?**

Maybe because they were shy.

**Remember the trees you saw and touched – why do you think it is important to grow trees and to look after forests?**

Note: homes and food for animals, timber for people to make things out of, forests are nice places to visit.



**If you could hear machinery, what do you think it was doing in the forest?**

It could have been machines cutting down trees, an essential part of the forest cycle in which trees are planted, cared for and felled, in order to provide timber for making things out of wood

– for more information about this, and further activities to learn about the timber cycle, please look at the Forestry Commission learning downloads at:

**[www.forestry.gov.uk/england-learning](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-learning)**.

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online questionnaire.

Many thanks for  
your help.