



## Back Pocket Outdoor Learning Ideas for Infants & Toddlers

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### Infants need outdoor activities that include:

**Fresh Air:** strollers, porches, blankets, soft cool grass, shady areas.

**Places to Grasp and Sit-up:** handles on porch vertical slats, toddler height surfaces, adult hands

**A Variety of Textures to Explore:** stepping-stones, interesting ground surfaces, fuzzy surface area, smooth and rough surfaces

**Sounds-** drum on a pan, other noisemakers, music on CD, seed shakers, singing, nature sounds (buzzing, birds)

### Toddlers need outdoor spaces to develop:

#### Physically:

**Climb:** child sized, one-step, sturdy, to balance while toddling, hay bales, driftwood, empty boxes

**Kick and toss:** large balls, cotton balls, balloons,

**Bend:** strollers, tricycles, wheelbarrows, push toys

**Walk:** toddling level props such as tires, ladder parallel to the ground to climb/walk through, tunnels, cardboard boxes.

**Collecting and Dumping** – cups and scoops for collecting sand, macaroni, rice to move from place to place

#### Sensory Awareness:

**Visual:** peeping areas, large equipment visual tours (trash truck), clouds, small critters, colorful scarves to blow in the wind, wind sox, hanging colorful Plexiglas in the trees to create light patterns, bubbles, noticing leaves, butterflies, snow, puffy dandelions, bugs.

**Feel:** A variety of textures for infants to reach and grasp. Think natural outside such as smooth (fur of a rabbit, lambs ear plant), rough (sand paper), cool (water, ice), warm (sand, large stone, sidewalk). Use Plants, wet and dry sand, mud pies, sea shells, grass seed in sand/water table, squeeze bottles with water on pavement, paintbrushes.

**Taste:** For example use edible plants easy to handle for toddlers – lettuce, radishes (grow quickly), Squash (grows large), Sunflowers (easy and attract interesting birds), Bush beans (high yield), peas (interesting transformations)

**Smell:** plants (mint, flowers) that smell fragrant; **Hear:** natural sounds, environmental sounds,

#### Language Development

**Express:** conversation, drawing paper on interesting surfaces, mix natural paint, read stories outside, sing and chant rhymes

#### Teacher Intent

Teachers should model curiosity. Notice things in the environment, comment on them, name them, invite children to explore and examine nature.

**Parent Involvement:** Involve parents in learning about the value of outdoor play by putting announcements and ideas in cubbies for parents. Explain the value of outdoor play. Provide at-home family outdoor ideas. Give parents data on the value of active play versus sedentary play, particularly as their children form their basic habits and ways of interacting early in life. Involve families by planning outdoor family days (outdoor picnics, beach day, carnivals, family play day, building things together, gardening). Provide adult areas - places adults are comfortable, accessible to all adults, places to rock and play (porch swing, rocking chair, benches, blankets).