THE WILD LENS™ | SCHOOL COMPANION

Nature Connection Anywhere



Where The Wild Ones Learn
A year of indoor nature learning
Early Years • Primary • Secondary

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Find a starting point

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CHOOSE WHERE TO BEGIN

New to indoor nature learning? Read pages 4 to 9, then choose one starting experience.

Planning across a term? Use pages 10 to 11 alongside a longer project.

Looking at access? Begin with pages 6 to 7 and the tool on page 74.

The seasonal ideas are ways to revisit familiar experiences. Use what is available locally and record the actual date. Plants and weather will not follow the same timetable everywhere.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The Wild Lens in everyday practice

The Wild Lens gives us a moment to notice what is already happening before deciding what to add. It can help us choose when to teach, offer support, make a change or wait.

NOTICE

Describe what you can see and hear. “She returned to the leaf tray four times” gives you something to think about. Notice the adult's role too. Who can reach the materials? Who gets interrupted? Who makes the decisions?

WONDER

Keep a few explanations open. Sorting could involve colour, texture, a story or the pleasure of arranging. Listen to the learner where you can. Their choices may tell you more as the experience unfolds.

RESPOND

Ask yourself, “Would anything from me help here?” You might hold a base steady, show a technique, offer a magnifier or make more space. Ask before joining in or changing someone's work. Step in promptly where there is a safety concern or harm.

REFLECT

Look at what happened after your response. Did it help the learner continue, try something different or communicate what they needed? Keep one useful thought for next time.

EXPLORING AND FINDING OUT

Some experiences lead to a comparison or a question to research. Others stay with play, looking closely or getting to know a material. Recording is useful when it helps the learner or your next decision.

A real leaf, a photograph and a model each offer different information. Help learners recognise those differences when they matter to the question. Indoor activities complement outdoor experiences; this companion is not practical Forest School certification.

EXPERIENCE 1 | PREPARE AND BEGIN

Grow and care for seeds

Possibility: Notice germination, change and the consequences of everyday care. Timing: 15 to 20 minutes to set up; short daily visits for around two weeks. Growth rates vary.

PREPARE

Use cress seeds, two clean plastic dishes, kitchen paper, water, labels and a spoon. Choose seeds suitable for classroom growing and follow the packet instructions. Place dishes in a bright, accessible indoor position away from heaters. Damp paper supports early seedling growth. [1]

BEGIN

1. Look closely at a few seeds. Invite a description, drawing or gesture before offering names for what is seen.
2. Dampen folded kitchen paper in each dish. Sprinkle a thin layer of seeds so there is space to see individual changes. Label the sowing date.

3. Agree who will check the paper each day and add a little water when needed. Keep it damp rather than flooded.
4. Revisit the same patch of seedlings. Let learners choose a way to show what changed. Keep the two dishes under similar conditions initially.

NOTICE AND SUPPORT

What is different from yesterday? Where can you see a root or shoot?
Offer a magnifier, change the viewing position or help with watering.
Teach a word such as root when it makes a discovery easier to discuss.

CARE AND ACCESS

Small seeds are managed by an adult where needed. Offer a spoon or let a learner direct a partner. Keep hands clean and do not taste seeds or seedlings in this investigation. Adults remove deteriorating or mouldy material. Arrange care for weekends and holidays.

EXPERIENCE 1 | ADAPT AND REVISIT

Extend the growing investigation

EARLY YEARS

Offer one clearly visible dish and short, repeated visits. Children might notice the paper changing colour when wet or point to a new shoot. An adult can sow while a child chooses the position or directs watering. Use a photograph beside the dish to make change visible.

PRIMARY

Invite pairs to choose a small patch to observe. Record the date, number of visible shoots or a measured height. If a comparison emerges, agree what will change and what will stay similar. A simple start is comparing two sowing dates using the same seed type, dishes and care routine.

SECONDARY

Offer a question about reliability: how much evidence would justify a claim about growth? Learners can design repeated samples, define what counts as germination and evaluate measurements. Give responsibility for care, records or a practical recommendation for another classroom.

RETURN TO THE QUESTION

Photograph the same area from the same position. Compare early predictions with later evidence. Paper-grown cress is a short investigation; plan an appropriate end and responsible disposal. Use a separate growing project with suitable compost if learners want to explore longer term plant care.

Scientific care: Germination and sustained plant growth are different processes. Seedlings initially draw on stored reserves; a damp-paper demonstration does not show that mature plants can live on water alone. [1, 4]

WHAT THE ADULT MIGHT RECORD

“The pair checked the paper before watering and added two spoonfuls after noticing it was dry.” You could ask what helped them decide when to add water.

SOMETHING TO FOLLOW

What can we change about our observation method so that tomorrow’s comparison is more trustworthy?

WINTER INVESTIGATION W1

Observe ice becoming water

Purpose: Describe a change of state through repeated observations at room temperature. Time: around 20 to 30 minutes to begin, with time to return.

PREPARE

An adult prepares equal small pieces of clean water ice. Use a shallow tray, shatter-resistant dishes, tongs, cloths and a timer if useful.

INVESTIGATE

1. Place one piece in a dish and invite observations of its outline and any liquid appearing.
2. Return at agreed intervals. Learners can draw, photograph or describe what changes.
3. Compare the beginning and end. Ask what evidence supports describing the ice as water rather than as something that disappeared.

WAYS TO JOIN IN

Early Years: Watch or use tongs with support. Brief visits and an adult demonstration can replace touching cold material.

Primary: Record a sequence and identify what stayed the same material while its state changed.

Secondary: Design a repeatable comparison, taking account of starting mass, shape, room conditions and measurement limits.

FOLLOW THEIR INTEREST

A short look may be enough. Let learners return to the changing shape without asking for a fresh record each time.

COME BACK TO IT

Compare with a second small piece on another day, noting different conditions. Avoid prolonged skin contact, tasting and hot water. Supervise cold materials, wipe spills and empty dishes after use.

REUSABLE PLANNING TOOL

Plan a responsive investigation

Experience or project Date

Group or age phase

Starting point - What have learners noticed, asked or repeatedly chosen?

Learning intention - What would it be useful to explore or understand?

Access - What communication, sensory, physical or organisational support is needed?

Prepare - What materials, space and necessary boundaries will be available?

Keep flexible - Which decisions can learners influence?

Evidence - What small record would help you decide the next step?

After the visit: Carry one observation and one adult decision into the next plan. A change of direction can be recorded as a justified response rather than a failed plan.