

The Muddy Puddle Teacher



Muddy Puddle Adventures | EYES

**B E E G R E E N A N D O N L Y P R I N T I F Y O U
H I V E T O :)**

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Welcome



Message from our Founder - Sarah Seaman

Welcome :)

This pack will help restore purpose to your teaching and show you how getting a little messy can make outdoor learning more memorable for your students. If you're unfamiliar with the Muddy Puddle Teacher Approach then please refer to our handbook which will guide you through our Muddy ways. On this page you'll see the three Muddy Ms. These are our core values that remind us to give children the outdoor experience that they deserve. It can be very tricky at times not to let your indoor traits spread to the outdoors. We encourage you to use our tips and the attached handbook as these will help keep you focused and shed light when you need it. Have fun and enjoy getting Muddy!

Sarah :)



Muddy active



On cold days you'll want to keep the children even more active so don't be afraid to have little breaks where necessary. At Muddy HQ we call this 'dispersing'. We let the children go for a jog around the yard or jump on the spot and do star jumps if space is limited. This gets children warmed up and gives them that burst of energy they sometimes need to focus on more challenging work.

Some of the activities below require asking the children to sit down and do work on the floor. Get them to run around while they search and collect items such as sticks, leaves and mud. You can ask them to run, hop, skip or jump. Make it more challenging and increase the pace by putting a timer on how long they have to collect the items.

Muddy nature



We believe in BALANCE and while our goal is to promote the use of natural resources, we understand that this may be restrictive at times and not always possible in every lesson. But we do want to encourage you to use natural resources and most of our ideas will make this very easy for you. Why is this so important? Because it gives children the chance to experience and touch nature, all while getting good bacteria into their systems. It's also a much better sensory experience for children if they use natural resources rather than plastic. And above all, it encourages sustainability and teaches the future generation to respect the environment.

Muddy well-being



The Muddy Puddle Approach is passionate about school being a happy and safe space for children. Learning is such a gift and should always be fun for children of all ages. So try to distinguish between indoor and outdoor activities. Avoid using indoor practices that can often segregate groups, such as differentiating, grouping by ability or gender, competitions or stars of the day. Instead, let the children be children. Give them the chance to simply enjoy learning and achieve together without rewards. It will take some time to shift your mindset and teaching style, but don't worry. It will be worth it once you see the results!

Hello World!

How to play

This game is a great first task to warm up with! It'll get your class or group looking at their surroundings and noticing the world around them.

- Get children to work in pairs or groups of threes.
- The children must decide on a spot called 'camp'. This will be a spot each child knows to return to once they've completed their task.
- Each child then gets a turn to say 'Hello!' to the world.
- One child at a time has to run and find something in their outdoor space to bring back to the group. Upon returning, they all discuss what it is and then put it in a pile by their feet.
- The next child then has a go and this process is repeated until all the children have completed the task. If you're working with older children ask them to find something different each time. If you're working with younger children, stick to repeating the same task.
- Do this for several minutes so that the children have a varied and interesting pile of worldly items at their feet that they can discuss, chat and wonder about.
- Finish by asking the children to gather all their items and make a big circle with what they've collected. The circle will be referred to as the "World". All children will stand in the "World" and look around saying 'Hello World!'
- Get children to observe what it's made of and discuss what other nature they see.
- Ask the children to talk about the manmade items they see as well. How do they compare? Look down, side to side, up and around!
- Encourage the children to talk about what makes up the world. Why do we need trees? Why do we need water, clouds and the sun?

Tips for Every Day Practice

There's no doubt that the modern child looks down a lot.

How can you address this? Try a new approach. Every time you take the children outside, ask them to take a few minutes to look up and around them. Encourage them to lie on their back or crouch down low to get a different perspective.

You can also ask children to answer these questions:

- What does the weather look like today? What season are we in?
- What animals are out now and what animals are hibernating?
- Do you see any plants typical to this time of the year?
- What is the mud like today?
- Do you see any muddy puddles?
- Are there any dangers we need to move away from?
- What does the air smell like?
- How does the world feel today?



Muddy Tips

- Move this task indoors and get children to take their natural items with them. You can display them in the classroom or use them for other areas and topics.
- For children worried about dirt, take some gloves and see if this is a more comfortable starting point for them.
- Get your children out in all weathers. Ask them to notice what changes they can see in the nature around them when it rains, gets cold or is hot.
- Allow children some time to imagine and make things with their items. This will help them build a stronger connection to nature.

'When children
come
into contact
with nature,
they reveal
their strength'
Maria
Montessori.

Mud Friends

Activities to do in Mud!

Here are a few Muddy activities to help your children connect with the muddy world! These are relevant to all ages. Older kids love this kind of thing too, so let them have a go and see how they respond. All children connect with the world through play.

Get children to:

1. Make mud pies.
2. Make mini-mud sculptures.
3. Make mud characters, using grass for hair and stones for eyes.
4. Roll down hills.
5. Sit in the mud.
6. Find sticks and write in the mud and draw shapes or pictures.
7. Put their hands in the mud. Feel it, squelch it and squirt it.
8. Take their shoes and socks off and walk in the mud.
9. Make mud paint and draw pictures with it.
10. Dip their finger in the mud and draw pictures on their arms or put lines on their face for camouflage.
11. Make mud potions by mixing mud, grass, stones and leaves.
12. Play in muddy puddles. Encourage them to jump in them, put their hands in them, plop stones in them and stir them with sticks.
13. Make mud angels with their bodies.
14. Build habitats and homes for animals with mud and sticks.
15. Plant bulbs, seeds and vegetables.

Top 4 Benefits of Mud

Still not convinced about the benefits of mud? Here are some incredible benefits that will change your mind:

1. Sensory benefits. Mud gives children a natural sensory experience which stimulates their sense of smell, touch, sound and sight all in one go! This works incredibly well with older children as they don't get enough of this and it really boosts their imagination and creativity.
2. Health Benefits. There are lots of articles online which highlight the health benefits of playing in the mud. Many even claim that mud contains good bacteria which helps reduce the allergies children have.
3. Happiness Benefits. Our technology-savvy kids sometimes just need to spend some time outside playing with the mud and being carefree. Show them that nature can become a great play space. Encourage them to go outside and have some fun with nature. Get them to roll down hills, make mud pies and play in muddy puddles!
4. Creativity Benefits. Mud is great for sculpting and your children can create many different artistic creations such as mini-sculptures, characters or just anything that comes from their wonderful imaginations.

Time to get your children playing in the mud ASAP!

Help! They don't like Mud!

No problem!

- Start with baby steps. Let the child watch others do it first. Some children need some light encouragement and will want to participate once they see their peers involved. For others it may take more time and they may need to observe for several months before they take part.
- Don't apply pressure. If the child comes from a home where mud is considered dirty, it may be a big ask to get the child to touch it. So relax and wait until they're ready.
- Give the child some tools like a spoon, bowl or gloves. This may encourage them to want to touch the mud.

'The most memorable days end with the dirtiest clothes'

Tend to the Trees

The first question to ask yourself is: do you know the names and types of trees you have in your grounds? If not, find an app that will help you familiarise yourself with each tree. Remember this is your personal journey too! You need to make sure that you practice what you preach and that you're a good role model they can follow. Do your children understand why we need trees? How do they treat trees? What do they think of them? Understanding the starting point for both you and your children is important so that you can measure your progress.

Make a Start

If you have no trees in your space then get your children to plant some. A great idea is using a tyre to make an upcycled tree pot. The Woodland Trust also sends free trees to educational settings, so head to their website for more information.

Then move onto learning the names of the trees and what types they are. Deciduous or evergreen? Pine or conifer? Once you've done this, assign children to different trees and try out some of these ideas:

- Tie soft, silky ribbons on trees to brighten them up and make the children look at them.
- Make natural art gifts and lay them at the foot of the tree.
- Hang socks from the branches and put treats inside them.
- Hang up bird feeders using oats and lard.
- Personalise the trees by giving them names or attaching large googly eyes with clay.

You want to make the tree a feature so that it looks like a wall space in your indoor classroom. It needs to be looked at, referred to and watched over the seasons in order for children to connect and take notice. If children have this connection, they're more likely to respect them and want to protect them in the future.

Not enough time?

If you're struggling for time and need something snappy, here are some quick ideas to help children bond with nature:

- Ask children to feel the bark and leaves. Get them to talk about how they feel and discuss which part of the tree they touched.
- Do some tree rubbings of the bark and their leaves.
- Make the trees into characters and develop a personality for them! Incorporate this into story writing.
- Tree hugs! Give a tree a hug and see if you can get your arms all the way around it!
- Measure your trees and find out how tall and wide they actually are.
- Make pictures and art from the natural waste the tree has left. Where do all the parts you use come from on the tree?
- Make leaf men and women or stick people.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

— William Shakespeare

Look on UP!

At Muddy HQ, one thing we don't miss from our old indoor practices is displays. Having to change displays every half term on top of your already busy schedule is less than ideal. Let's be honest - it's a nightmare! What if we told you that you could create a classroom that automatically changed displays all by itself and required zero maintenance from you?

Sounds too good to be true, right? It's not! Just step out of those classroom doors and give children the chance to see nature at its best. Children will see their outdoor environment grow, observe different weather patterns and witness how nature responds to rain, sunshine, hail and snow. If that's not an education in itself, we're not sure what is!

The Weather

For these exercises, we don't want the children to hold anything in their hands. Resist the urge to take out your clipboard and tick charts! We just want the children to take some time out and observe their surroundings. We also want them to use their senses and feel the rain on their skin or the wind in their hair.

You might be surprised to learn that it's quite common for children not to be allowed to experience being outside or splash in puddles. As simple as it may sound, this is what children really need!

Here are a few ideas to change this and get children out in all weathers:
On rainy days encourage children to jump into puddles. Ask them to catch raindrops with their tongue and plop stones into puddles. Get them to sit under canopies or umbrellas.
On windy days get children to take flags out. Ask children to stand and watch their hair and clothes move. Get them to throw leaves in the air and watch them float away.
On cold days encourage children to examine the ice. Ask them to feel it with their fingers and touch different surfaces.
On snowy days get them to feel the snow in their hands. Encourage them to make snowmen and throw snowballs.

The Seasons

It's important to get children out in all seasons so that they notice the changes in nature and understand how different wildlife responds to changing weather. Making them aware of climate change and global warming is also important.

Here are some ideas that you can use when seasons change. We recommend you deliver these at the start and end of every season.

- Find one spot in your space that you repeat this activity in:
- Ask children to lie on their backs and think back to the previous seasons. What was the weather like last season? What is it like now? What did the trees look like? What do they look like now? How have they changed?
- Repeat these questions for the plants, grass and other natural spaces. What wildlife do you see now? What animals did you see last season? Try to compare what we do at winter for instance and what nature does e.g we wrap up and animals hibernate. This will help further their understanding of us and them actually existing as one.
- Reflecting in this way will really help your children focus on the changing seasons and how nature responds and adapts to this.

Working with Families

Here are a few tried and tested ideas that we know work! Connecting families with nature is an essential part of the MPTA. For a child to have a lifelong love for nature and learning, all role models need to play their part. You may look at this list and think “No Way”! Just give these activities a chance and you’ll see the amazing impact each activity has. Not everything impacts straight away so remember to take your time!

Home Learning

Try setting a homework exercise that relates to nature. Ask the families to go for a walk, collect treasures and talk about where they have come from. You can even ask them to research the names of the trees when they go home.

Alternatively suggest bird watching. Ask them to draw birds they see on their way and encourage them to make a list of any they recognise. You can also ask them to pay attention to the sounds of birds on the way.

Encourage them to go bug hunting! This is a popular activity that children of all ages love. Make sure you remind them to put the bugs back where they found them so they can be with their families again.

Head to our resources section for parent packs and handouts.

Planting Days

If your setting needs more plants and trees, you can encourage parents or grandparents to bring one in and help their child plant it. At Muddy HQ, our favourite memory is the “Plant a Tree Day” whereby each child got the chance to plant a tree and name it. This proved very popular.

Trees can also be ordered for free from the National Trust and it’s a great way to make your outdoor spaces more natural. If you need plants, you can ask parents and grandparents to bring an upcycled plant pot as well. Wellies, old tins and pots and pans with holes in them work particularly well for this.

Sponsored Walks

Why not take part in a sponsored nature walk and raise money for charity? You can also encourage children to do 15 walks over a period of one month for a certain amount. Or just have a walkathon. Ask children and their families to go on walks and record them on a chart for comparison. Get them to show you their results at the end and share their experiences!

Or invite parents and relatives in and give them an opportunity to spend time with their children in nature. Busy schedules might mean that they don’t always get this opportunity so it could inspire them to want to do more of this at home.

Congratulations!

To

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For completing this terms

Nature Nurture Group

You have shown you can work as part of a group, follow and understand rules. That you are confident to try new activities and have listened attentively to a range of situations.

You have also shown a good connection with nature and got very messy and very muddy! :)

Well done!

Signed.....Date.....