



# *6 Outdoor Activities for at school*

# *Activity 1*

## *"Making a Mini Den"*

# Introduction

The challenge is to build your very best mini den. You will have to work very carefully, and imagine that you have become mini yourself, shrinking down down down.

This mini den of yours can be built inside your school, or it could be built outside on the playground. The den is going to be home to a character of your very own choosing. Here are our directions on how to get started and TOP TIPS for a marvellous mini den...

## Did you know?

Den building is a popular activity on visits here to Thornbridge Outdoors. Sometimes students make full-size dens to shelter themselves and a friend in, and sometimes they make mini dens, which are the perfect size to shelter the small pebble animals they have created. Teachers have sometimes been known to test how waterproof the full-size dens are by asking student to get inside and then chucking a bucket of water over the top!

# Making a Mini Den



**First things first: You need to decide who your mini den character is going to be.**

Is it the little bunny rabbit you have just drawn?

A fairy only you can see, or a nutcracker from the Christmas tree?

Is it the origami swan you made?

Or a family of paper chain people?

Will it be your favourite lego figure?

Or number one cuddly toy?

A pebble animal in the garden?

Or a real animal like a hedgehog or frog?



Good luck!



**Second: You need to know the story and background of your character, to design their home.**

How will your character need to get into their den?

Do they hop, walk, fly, slither or swim?

Will they want their den to be:

warm or cold?

wet or dry?

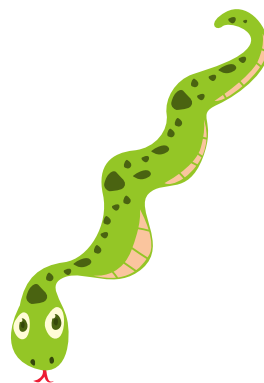
big or small?

comfy or basic?

flat or on a slope?

dark or light?

breezy or sheltered?



What does your home need to provide - do they need to be near to their food and water sources? Where would those be?



**Third: Who do they need protection from?  
Who are their predators or enemies?**

Where does your den need to be located to provide protection for your mini den character?

Is the predator a fox, which can't climb or fly, so a nest up high would keep your character safe?

Or are the predators some of the people you at your school perhaps, so you need to make sure the den is really camouflaged and hidden, so they can't find it?

Is it an evil wizard who can't go into the dark?

Or a wicked witch who melts if they are touched by water, so a moat would provide protection?





## Fourth: What building materials can you gather together from around your school to build your mini den with?

Can you use any existing materials to give your mini den strength, like rest it up against a tree or a table leg?

What can you make a good framework from?

Things like wooden sticks and twigs, pencils, cutlery, drumsticks or chopsticks might work well.



Then what can be used to bind your framework together and strengthen it?

Maybe string or pipe cleaners?  
Elastic bands or hair bobbles?



What else could you use to give your den added protection, and keep your character safe and hidden from harm?

Paper, card, books, toilet rolls, leaves, grass, pebbles...



**Finally, it's time to introduce your character to their mini den!  
What do they think, are they going to be safe and feel at home inside?**

You can do it!



## Fifth: Now your den is all set up, is there anything you can do to give it a grand design makeover? Add a little luxury? Or hidden design features?

Imagine this were your den, and you had to live in it...

Would you maybe like something soft underneath your feet so that your toes wouldn't get cold on the ground?  
What could you make something soft for the floor from?



Or perhaps you might like somewhere to rest your tired body when you're home, what could you make to help with this?

Perhaps you might want somewhere to eat your meals, or play some games?

If you were inside your den and you heard noises outside, what would be helpful?

Maybe you would want some inside space as well as some outside space?

Would you like to be able to look out from your den and see who's approaching?

Or a second exit might be helpful, in case you need to make a sneaky escape?



# *Activity 1*

## *"Making a Mini Den"*

### *Activity Sheet (ages 5-8)*

# Mini Dens - Activity Sheet

Who is your mini den for?

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What worked really well when you made your mini den?

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What is your mini den made from?

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What went very wrong when you made your mini den?

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What is your favourite thing about your mini den?


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Can you answer these 5 important questions about your mini den?



# Mini Dens - Activity Sheet



Can you use this space to draw your mini den with your character inside?



# *Activity 1*

## *"Making a Mini Den"*

### *Activity Sheet (ages 9-12)*

# Mini Dens - Activity Sheet

1

Who is the character who lives in your mini den? Tell us all about them.

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2

Describe your mini den, what makes it a good home for your character?

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Can you answer these 5 important questions about your mini den?

3

What is your favourite thing about your mini den?

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# Mini Dens - Activity Sheet

4

Did you have problems when constructing your den? What were they?

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5

What materials did you use for building? Which were the most useful?

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Activity sheet has been completed by:

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On the following date:

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Signed off by:

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Can you answer these 5 important questions about your mini den?



# Mini Dens - Activity Sheet



Can you use this space to draw your mini den with your character inside?



# Mini Den Inspiration...



*Activity 2*  
*"Scavenger Hunt"*

# *Introduction*

Your challenge is to join in a scavenger hunt on the playground. In order to take part in this scavenger hunt, imagine that you live out in the wild and – just like a wild animal – your survival depends on whether or not you can hunt for everything that you need in order to survive. We've adapted our Thornbridge Outdoors scavenger hunt so that you can play along at school. Will you be able to scavenge everything from the list before time runs out??

Here are our instructions on how to get started and your list of items to hunt for...

# Teachers

**Please encourage creativity when your students are searching for items to fit each category - anything goes so long as they can explain why it makes sense, there isn't anything too silly to gather up! Perhaps you could award bonus points for thinking outside the box? And for helping their classmates out with ideas if they've got stuck with something on the list?**

Scavenger Hunting is an activity that children can take part in on school visits here to Thornbridge Outdoors. When they arrive on a residential, a scavenger hunt can be a great excuse for students to run around and explore the new nature filled Peak District environment that they find themselves in. Some schools ask students to select their favourite scavenged items afterwards to adorn dream catchers they will weave from willow and wool during their visit. Other schools scavenge 'on the go' - they lead a hunt as part of a walk around the grounds of Thornbridge Outdoors and ask students to collect up interesting items that they spot during the walk, in order for each child to make a journey stick afterwards to tell the unique story of their experience.



# Scavenger Hunt

First things first, make sure you know the following!

1. Where will you start from and where do you need to be (with your haul) when the time is up?
2. What is your time limit for this challenge? (30 minutes might work well!)
3. How will you know when the time is up? Will an adult let you know, or will you set an alarm?
4. Are you dressed appropriately for the weather (Do you need a raincoat, suncream or a woolly jumper?)
5. Where will you start from, and where do you need to be when your time is up?
6. Where can you hunt and where is out of bounds (Teachers, see the bug below for suggestions!)

At the end,  
you get 1 point for  
every correct item.  
Each item may only be  
counted once!

When you've done, you must make sure that the items collected (in particular live creatures) are returned to the exact spot that they were found.

Good luck!



## Did you know?

In the wild, a scavenger is an animal that takes any opportunity it can to make off with things that it finds lying around. It might pick up fruits on the ground that have fallen from the trees, or grab leftovers to eat from inside our rubbish bins. A scavenger might pick up twigs from the ground and build their nest with them, or they might scoop up a feather from the pavement or pick at the green moss on a wall and use these to line their nest!

e.g. You may only pick up natural objects (do not touch litter), stay 2 metres from other people at all times, you mustn't go through any gates or over any walls/fences/hedges, you can't climb anything, and you mustn't go in the car park

# Your challenge is to scavenge the following items

Something prickly

Something soft

Something that gets wetter as it dries

Something sticky

Something green that's longer than 10cm long

Find and collect a live animal (no bigger than your little finger nail)

Something smelly

Something woody

Something to leaf through

Something noisy

Something heavy

Something smooth

Something with hair (If outside - look closely at the detail of natural objects)

Something that floats

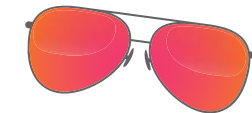
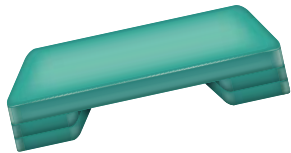
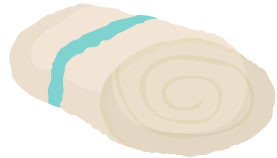
Some things you can arrange to spell the word FOX

Something to sit on

Something brown

Something that could hold things

Something you can see through



# Scavenger Hunting Inspiration

*What's green and over 10cm long?*

*What could you arrange to spell the word FOX?*





*Activity 3*  
*"Art Attack"*

# *Introduction*

You're being challenged to an art attack either in your classroom or out on the playground. In order to take part in this challenge you will need to forage about for useful materials to use, that you can firstly arrange into a picture or pattern on the floor or the grass, and next that you can build upwards with into a tall and sturdy tower.

In the first part of this challenge, you get to imagine a picture that you would like to design, and then it's your job to bring that to life using the materials you have to hand.  
How will you do that?

Then, for the next part, your challenge is to build a tower as high as you possibly can. Will it reach higher than your knees? And will it stay standing when a big gust of wind comes along (or a big waft of air from a book)?

Ready to get creative? Here are our instructions for the art attack challenge...

# Teachers

Please encourage creativity when your students are taking on the art attack challenge – anything goes so long as they can describe what the pattern or picture is meant to be, and so long as their tower isn't a danger! Perhaps you could praise them for thinking outside the box? And for helping their classmates out with ideas if they're struggling?

Twig Towers and Nature's Pictures & Patterns are both activities that children can take part in on school visits here to Thornbridge Outdoors. When groups come to stay on a residential, they sometimes head off on a Nature Trail to explore our 30 acres of grounds and complete environmental activities along the way. Both of these Art Attack activities are easy to take part in at school or out on the playground. These are fun and interesting ways for students to find out more about the environment around them.

# Art Attack!

## Step 1 - Hunt for a picture

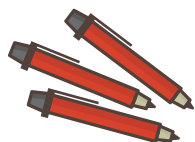
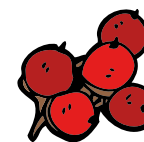
Your challenge is to hunt for items that you can use to make an interesting picture or pattern. Think about the textures, colours and shapes that you're looking to find. You can make the picture either inside on the floor or outside on the grass.

### IF YOU'RE INSIDE

Go hunting for some pens & pencils, spoons & forks, bobbles & socks, rubbers & paper clips, and anything else you can find safely! Use your imagination...

### IF YOU'RE OUTSIDE

Go hunting for some leaves & twigs, petals & berries, pine cones & pebbles, and anything else you can find safely! You could even make a giant picture out of sports equipment, like tennis balls and shuttlecocks, skipping ropes and hula hoops...



Be careful of prickly plants or plants that might sting. Don't pick special flowers or plants. Be sure to only pick up natural objects, if you're unsure check with an adult before you touch them.

## Ready, steady, go!

Here are some examples of patterns and pictures that children (and instructors) have enjoyed making...

When you have finished making your picture, remember to wash your hands!



# Art Attack!

## Step 2 - Foraging sculpture

Decide what shape your base will be... square, triangular, hexagonal? Then build up your tower from there. See what shape you can make and how high you can make it!



Once you've created a picture on the floor, you can progress to having a go at making a 3D sculpture. You can make the tower either inside on the floor or outside on the grass.

### IF YOU'RE INSIDE

Go hunting for some pens & pencils, spoons & forks, chopsticks & rolling pins, rulers & paint brushes, and anything else you can find safely! Use your imagination....

### IF YOU'RE OUTSIDE

Go hunting for some twigs & sticks, and anything else you can find safely!



Be careful not to pick up any prickly twigs. Make sure to use the dead wood that is already on the floor and not to break branches off living trees.

## Ready, steady, go!

When you have finished making your tower, remember to wash your hands!

Here are some examples of towers that children (and instructors) have enjoyed making...





# Art Attack Inspiration





*Activity 4*  
*"Roller Ball"*

# *Introduction*

You're being challenged to a game of Roller Ball out on the playground! How far will your Roller Ball travel? For this challenge you will need to be inventive - what materials can you gather together that will send a ball rolling successfully from start to finish, without getting stuck or falling to the ground?? The wackier the better!

Ready to build a really fun Roller Ball run? Here are the instructions...

# Teachers

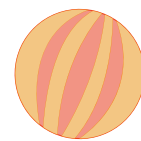
**Please encourage your students to be inventive when they're taking on the Roller Ball challenge - anything goes so long as it's safe and they can imagine it might work. Some ideas will fail, others will turn out to be a surprise success! Perhaps you could praise them for thinking outside the box? And for encouraging their classmates if they're struggling?**

Roller Ball is an activity that lots of children enjoy taking part in on school visits here to Thornbridge Outdoors. When residential groups come to stay, and take part in roller ball, everyone gets to take one piece of drainpipe and the team gets one small ball. The team has to work together to roll the ball from one piece of pipe to the next, with everyone running ahead once the ball has passed through their pipe to catch the ball again further along!

The team have adapted the Roller Ball activity here so that it's easy for you to play it with your students on the playground. But will you succeed??



# Roller Ball!



Your challenge is to make the longest roller ball run you can, using only the materials you can collect from around your school! This challenge is best completed outside.

Please remember to keep 2m away from other people (even if your ball doesn't!)

**FIRST** You need to find a small ball to play with! (A marble? Pingpong ball? Bouncy ball?)

**SECOND** Choose a starting point at least 30cm above the ground, or higher if you want a harder challenge! (A window ledge? A chair? On top of a wall?)

**THIRD** What will the ball drop into when it reaches the finish line? (A bucket? An upside down cone? A flower pot!)

**FOURTH** Now the course is set, you need to collect materials together to make your roller ball run with.

**FIFTH** Now you have everything, it's time to build your roller ball run!

## TOP TIP

Imagine your ball is like a droplet of water running right down a plant from a leaf, all the way down its stem, to the ground. Where might the water run away off course? Or fall during its journey? Do you want the droplet to run slower or faster? Do you want it to fall in a straight line or to bend? What would work best, to help it on its way?

## MATERIALS

Look around you, ask your teacher if you can use items in the PE cupboard, and think about what is cylinder shaped? That's items like poster tubes or kitchen roll inners. Are there things you can roll up like foam mats, or paper? Or tie up into a tube, like bin bags or parachutes? Or long items to guide the ball down a track like hockey sticks or metre rulers?

When you've finished, remember to wash your hands!

## 5 IMPORTANT RULES

You aren't allowed **to touch** the ball while it's rolling.

If the ball falls while it's rolling and touches **the ground** then it must be returned to the start.

The ball has to **drop 30cms** vertically (in mid air) on its journey from the starting point to the finish line.

You aren't allowed to touch the materials making up the roller ball run while the ball is **rolling on them**. If your ball is stuck, you can move other bits - above or below - to try and get it moving again, but not where it's stuck.

The ball has to keep moving in the **same direction** the whole time, no turning back!

Check with a teacher which materials you can use to fix the run together and hold it in place!



# Ready, Steady, Go!

Here are some examples of roller ball runs that children (and instructors) have enjoyed making...

## BONUS CHALLENGE

The instructor team have been wondering... **how long** you can make your roller ball run? Once yours is working, have a go at **measuring the distance** that the ball rolls from start to finish, using a ruler or a piece of string. How far does it travel in total? Can you **add an extension** to make the distance any longer?



Good luck!



## *Activity 5*

# *"Wizard's Rainbow Colour Hunt"*

# Introduction



The instructor team here at Thornbridge Outdoors are handing over the baton for their activity challenge... to a great wizard instead. A wizard whose magical powers enable them to command every colour of the rainbow. Spring is in full swing and this challenge will require you to look very very closely at your surroundings - which are rarely one colour. The wizard is challenging YOU to become a detective, and investigate the detail of the world around you!

You can take part in the Wizard's Rainbow Colour Hunt indoors, and explore the world around you in school. Or, you can take on the challenge outdoors and become a nature detective, as you hunt for colours on the playground. Will you find every colour of the rainbow in your surroundings? Or will there be a troublesome colour that proves too tricky to find?

Ready to explore the rainbow? Here are the instructions...



# Teachers

Please encourage your students to really explore their surroundings. The key to success in this challenge is to look at the fine detail, often we see something and assume it's all one colour, but when we look really closely we see it's made up of lots of colours, and what better time to look for colours than in Spring. When they're taking on the Colour Hunt challenge - anything goes so long as it's safe and more or less matches the colour (or colours) that they're hunting for!

Perhaps you could praise them for thinking outside the box? Or, for not giving in even if at first it seems as though they've drawn something which is going to be impossible to find? And for pointing their classmates in the right direction if they're struggling?

Our Thornbridge Challenge is a series of activities (to which the Rainbow Colour Hunt is a new addition!) that lots of children enjoy taking part in on school visits here to Thornbridge Outdoors. During their residential, the group are challenged to work together as a team to take on the Wizard's challenges, including a tunnel system, rope swing, giant seesaw and more, to earn stars, collect clues and hopefully discover the hidden treasure!

Who doesn't like a treasure hunt, eh? And when it's devised by the cunning instructor team here at Thornbridge Outdoors, it's not going to be easy to solve! The challenges are normally spread all around our site and everybody has to get stuck in; there's a big focus on team working and communication skills throughout. We've adapted our colour hunt here so that everyone can join in at school, and can take part whether they're indoors or outdoors. We hope you have fun!

# Wizard's Rainbow Colour Hunt!

Your challenge has been set by a wizard whose magical powers enable him to command every colour of the rainbow. This challenge will require you to look closely at your surroundings... they're rarely one colour. Be a detective and look at the detail of the world around you. For example: a daisy might have white and pink petals, an orange or yellow centre, and a green stem with white hairs.

Draw a big picture of a rainbow and colour your rainbow in.

Cut along the lines of the rainbow, so you get lots of coloured semi circles. Ask an adult to help if you need help to do it safely.

Next, cut up your semi circles into small pieces of coloured paper. Put the pieces into a bowl and mix them around. Close your eyes, or blindfold yourself with a scarf.

Pick out 1 piece of paper from the bowl and challenge yourself to find something with that colour on either inside or outside.

If you want a more difficult challenge, pick out 2 different pieces of paper.

If you pick out 2 pieces of paper of the same colour you have to find something with only that colour on it.

But if you pick out 2 different colours, your object has to have both those 2 colours on it - that's tricky!

## Careful!

Don't pick living plants or flowers (let them grow!), and avoid plants that are prickly or sting. If you're playing this outside, only touch natural objects. If you're unsure, check with an adult before you touch something.

When you've finished, remember to wash your hands!



## *Activity 6*

*"Touch, don't look!"*

# *Introduction*

For this challenge, you're going to work together with a partner to explore the world using your four senses other than sight. When one of you is blindfolded and can't see anymore, how will your partner guide you about safely and steadily? And how will you identify the object beneath your fingertips... how does it feel?

Ready to surrender your sight? Here are the instructions...

# Teachers

Please inspire your students to really get into the 'Touch, don't look!' challenge – perhaps prompt the Guide to choose an object that will be really challenging for their partner, and you can encourage the Blindfolded Adventurer to have a go at guessing the answer, even if they're not sure. Perhaps you could praise them for thinking outside the box?

The challenge might be a good cue for the class to talk about your surroundings, and how different they seem to your different senses! Some items may be easy to identify through touch, while others might feel nothing like you'd have imagined! The same can be said for your hearing, smell and taste. If the challenge is a success, your blindfold could be used for a range of spin off games designed to investigate those senses, too.

This game has been adapted from the 'Hug a Tree' challenge that can students take part in on our Nature Trail, when they come on a visit to Thornbridge Outdoors. As well as encouraging the students to explore their senses and investigate the natural environment around them, the challenge promotes trust between the student who is blindfolded and the classmate who is their guide. The instructor team have adapted the rules here to create a version that is suitable to play at school, and we hope you have just as much fun!

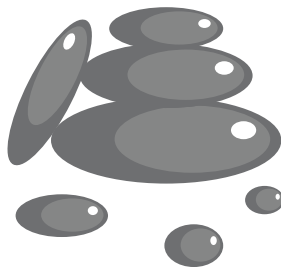
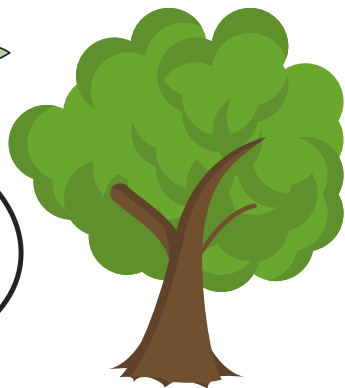
# Touch, don't look!

Your challenge is to work together with a partner to explore the world around you without your sense of sight. When one of you is blindfolded and can't see anymore, how will your partner guide you about safely and steadily? And how will you identify the object beneath your fingertips... how does it feel?

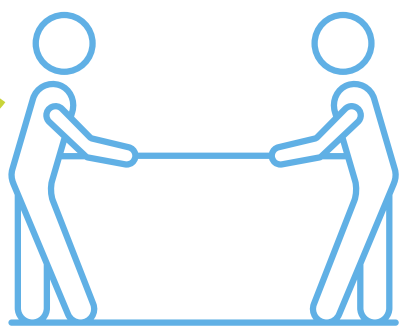
- 1 You need 2 adventurers to complete this challenge, so find someone who you trust to keep you safe.
- 2 First, you each need something to make a blindfold to go over your eyes. Maybe your scarf, your hoody back to front, or your hat if you can pull it down over your eyes? You'll also need a piece of rope, or perhaps use 2 jumpers tied together or a long plastic marker pole from the PE cupboard. Whichever you go for, it needs to be 2 metres long.
- 3 In your pair, decide on a starting point (use an outside area with enough space to spin around, at least 5m wide).
- 4 One adventurer is blindfolded and the other adventurer becomes the guide.
- 5 The guide needs to look around and pick an object they are going to walk the blindfolded adventurer over to. A branch, a tree, a bench or a rock might work well.



Remember to wash your hands before and after the game!



Please turn over for steps 6-10...



# Touch, don't look!



- 6 The guide holds one end of the rope and the blindfolded adventurer holds the other end. The rope must remain tight between them, so the two adventurers can't get closer together.
- 7 Safely and slowly, the guide uses the rope to spin the blindfolded person around to help disorientate them. The guide must be very careful not to bump them into anything! And the blindfolded person will have one hand on the rope but they can hold their other hand out in front of themselves, so they feel protected from any hazards around.
- 8 Then, the guide walks in front of the blindfolded adventurer, using the rope to guide them safely over to an object. When the object is in front of them, ask the adventurer to feel the object with their hands (while still blindfolded). When they have felt it enough, the guide leads them back to the start point.
- 9 Ask the blindfolded adventurer to remove their blindfold, and walk the guide to the exact object that they touched. If they can't work it out, then the guide must take them to the object so they can feel it again, this time with their eyes open, to learn and get better for their next go. Now, both wash your hands.

- 10 Swap over! This time the blindfolded adventurer becomes the guide, and vice versa.



**Important rules for the guide**

When you're guiding someone, you must only lead them on flat ground as they could be injured otherwise. Don't walk them up or down any steps or steep ground, or over uneven terrain or anywhere near cars or roads. Be careful, too, that nothing will bump them in their face or body on their journey. And don't choose an object that's prickly, sharp or delicate as we wouldn't want your adventurer or the object to come to harm.



*That's all for now!*

*But please look out for more at  
[thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/news](https://thornbridgeoutdoors.co.uk/news)*

*We'll share a new activity each week.*