

# Activities and books to support exploring the environment during Spring

A resource for parents/teachers within the 'Spring' theme for learning

This resource is for teachers and parents to support students to engage in lots of activities focussed on art, sensory play, SESE, fine and gross motor skills and literacy skills.

The activities are provided under themes including resources on weather, clothing and gardening and ideas for using objects in the home.

## Theme 1: Gardening

Spring is a time where the weather gets better and we can get outside more. Whether we have a garden or park nearby it can be a fun, active way to explore and learn about nature.

**Title of Resource:** Twig ID – Woodland Detective

**Details of resource:** This resource gives pictures of different twig types, you can match them to twigs you find in trees around your house/area.

**Link:** [double click on the image](#)



**Title of Resource:** Spring Nature Hunt

**Details of resource:** This resource created by the Botanic gardens, has pictures of different spring nature items. Tick them off on walks in your garden, local park or area.

**Link in English:** <http://botanicgardens.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Spring-Nature-Hunt.pdf>

**Link in Irish:** <http://botanicgardens.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/to%CC%81rai%CC%81ocht.jpg>



More books and activities linked to gardening:

<https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Books-and-Activities-Linked-to-Gardening.pdf>

## Theme 2: Spring weather

### Books on spring weather

**Book title 1:** Who likes rain? Wong Herbert Yee

**Link to read aloud video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tbdu6eCpqrM>

**Description:** A lovely story for those who like to jump in muddy puddles and go out in the rain! But some animals don't like the rain...find out who...

**Learning Opportunities:**

- There are some lovely opportunities in this read aloud story for students to join in making the sounds of the rain, like plip plop!
- You could recreate the book by having a basin of water with the student's feet in it and encouraging them to recreate the little girl jumping in the puddle at the end.
- Add rice or marbles for a different sensory experience. For all those fans of Peppa Pig this might be a book they grow to love.

**Book title 2:** What will the weather be like today? Paul Rogers

**Link to read aloud video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgybpxTX0rM>

**Description:** A lovely story for those who like to jump in muddy puddles and go out in the rain! But some animals don't like the rain...find out who...

**Learning Opportunities:**

- The book ends by asking 'How is the weather where you are today?' The weather this time of year is very changeable and looking at the weather every morning is part of any class to encourage observation skills and oral language around the topic.
- You can make a simple weather chart at home and put a clothes peg on the type of weather you see out your window.
- Older/more able students might like to look at the weather forecast the night before, put a peg on the weather chart to show what the student thinks they will see in the morning and then compare the actual weather with their prediction.

### Other resources to support learning about the weather:

- There is a free printable weather chart here <https://alittlepinchofperfect.com/free-printable-weather-char/>, but you can make your own very simply with some paper and crayons/markers.
- <https://www.met.ie/> Met Eireann weather website is very visual and can be accessed easily from all devices.
- If you have a smart phone or tablet, the Windy app is very popular.
- <https://kidsweatherreport.com/report/Ireland/> very cute daily weather website where the weather is described by characters in appropriate clothing e.g. holding an umbrella for the rain with a big rain cloud overhead. Works for Ireland in general and most big towns and cities in Ireland.

## Theme 3: Clothing

### Books about clothing

**Book title 1:** Mrs. Mopple's Washing Line, Anita Hewitt

**Link to read aloud video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moA-PL2v4Ig>

**Description:** On a very windy day, while Mrs Mopple is indoors making the dinner, her washing is blown into the most unlikely places

**Book title 2:** Pete the Cat I love my white shoes, James Dean and Eric Litwin

**Link to read aloud video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUubMSfls-U>

**Description:** A really popular read, sing and dance along video for junior primary school classes.

**Learning Opportunities:**

- This website has lots of ideas and printable materials (If you have a printer) and songs <https://www.petthecatbooks.com/activities/>

**Book title 3:** Aliens love underpants, Claire Freedman

**Link to read aloud video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADnAGBWlqE>

**Description:** A great fun read about aliens and lots of different underpants!

**Learning Opportunities:** (all below are free to download)

- <https://www.teachingideas.co.uk/library/books/aliens-love-underpants>
- <https://www.twinkl.ie/resource/t-t-3564-aliens-love-underpants-matching-pants-activity>
- <https://www.twinkl.ie/resource/au-t-3290-australia-aliens-love-underpants-colouring-sheets>
- <https://www.twinkl.ie/resource/t-t-6455-aliens-love-underpants-addition-sheet>
- <https://www.worldbookday.com/resource/early-years-ideas-aliens-love-underpants/>

**Book title 4:** Learning Too Purpley, Jean Reidy

**Link to read aloud video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rPdHvnKEgo>

**Description** Simple read aloud about clothes that are too annoying to wear. If you have a child who is very sensitive to the feel of clothing this might be a lovely book to explore together.

**Learning Opportunities:** (The link below gives free resources to support the book – these resources are quite advanced in level but may give you ideas you can adapt as needed)

- [http://jeanreidy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/TOO\\_PURPLEY\\_Teachers\\_Guide\\_FINAL.pdf](http://jeanreidy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/TOO_PURPLEY_Teachers_Guide_FINAL.pdf)

## Resources to support learning about clothing

- [https://www.abcya.com/games/dress\\_for\\_the\\_weather](https://www.abcya.com/games/dress_for_the_weather) interactive online game to dress a dog for the weather
- <https://www.eslgamesplus.com/weather-vocabulary-interactive-game-for-esl-teaching/> this might be too advanced for some children but you choose a word to match the picture shown. Words are not spoken – it's just reading.
- <https://pbskids.org/ruff/games/dress-that-rhino> pick materials to cover Fluff the Rhino according to warm/cold times and places. Has closed captioning available. This links with SESE curriculum and STEM activities.
- Éadaí le pictiúrí: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyrwUYnGXX0>
- Éadaí ar an line: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIUgCCDi9bc>
- Make a spring picture using found objects in Nature  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9v5vonHSE5I>
- Make your own tree using sticks and leaves from your 5km walk. Take a photo of the art in the wild or bring the items home and glue them to paper; paint the leaves different colours etc.
- At this time of the year, most deciduous trees are still in bud. This guide may help you identify them on your walk. <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/48347/twig-id-sheet.pdf>
- The National Botanic Gardens have also created a lovely guide to be used in urban parks or on country walks

## Theme 4: Linking laundry to the curriculum

Doing the washing gives lots of opportunities for students to engage in lots of curriculum based activities at home.

**P.E. - Throwing and catching activities with socks:** Ball up three or four sports socks or thick adult socks and use this for throwing and catching activities. The socks make it very safe to do indoors or outdoors. See how far the student can throw them or roll them on the ground. How many steps of the stairs can you throw the socks up or down? Can you throw them over the car or the bins outside? Can you throw them through an open window? Can you throw them up the slide at the playground? Put a chalk circle or a hula hoop on the ground and have the student aim the socks at the target. This can also be done with a balloon if you put some dried peas/lentils into the balloon before you blow it up. The more you put in, the more difficulty is built into the activity.

**Maths using clothing:** Can you match all the socks from the washing? Talk them through this using lots of language so your child or the student hears words like; long; short; plain; coloured; big; small; one; two; the same as...; different; ....all this language is invaluable for students/children to hear.

Make mistakes and see if the student notices and corrects you. Count all the socks/t shirts etc. as you sort them. Take one thing away from the set and see if the child/student can give you the answer to 'How many are there now?'. Write out some numbers on paper and get the child to make sets of socks according to the number. You can write simple sums like  $3+1=$  or  $4-1=...$  on a page and get the child to use items of laundry to explore addition and subtraction e.g here are 4 socks, I'm going to take away one sock. How many socks have I left?

Who owns what clothes? Again, model your thinking by talking as you fold and put away 'Oh these must be Jim's jeans because he is very tall. Look how long these jeans are? When I put Chloe's jeans beside them they are much shorter....now what else belongs to Jim? Can we make a set of Jim's clothes all together over here?'

Can we make a set of orange/black/red etc. clothes....which set has the most clothes? Which set has the least clothes?

**Make art (fabric and fibre strand) with laundry,** take a picture and upload to SeeSaw - there are some ideas here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUQCKv5Rb04>;  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dlvhcG35gHY>

**Fine motor skills using clothes pegs:** Clothes pegs mimic the pinching activity used to hold a pencil or crayon. Attach and detach clothes pegs to piece of paper; magazine; newspaper; all around the rim of a saucepan or plate or cup. Play games identifying parts of toys using pegs e.g. peg Teddy's ear; peg Barbie's foot; peg the blue t shirt; peg the picture of fruit.

Get the student/child to be the teacher and you carry out the instruction. Make some mistakes and see if they notice. Lengthen and complicate the instruction by adding in left-right; colours; big small etc. If there is a washing line or clothes horse can the student/child help you to peg out the washing?

<https://ncse.ie/parent-special-class-or-special-school-motor-skills> The NCSE has some more ideas here for motor skills at home

**Art using clothes pegs** – if there are art materials at home you may get an idea or two from here <https://feltmagnet.com/crafts/clothespin-crafts-fun-ways-to-use-clothespins>

## Theme 5: Sensory activities based on spring environment theme

**Easy garden wind chimes** (using materials like sticks from your walk; paint and string)

- Link: <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/how-make-easy-garden-wind-chimes>

**Make a rain maker noise shaker** (a plastic bottle/Pringles tube/empty tissue boxes/clean butter spread or takeaway container)

- Fill container with table salt; rice; lentils; dried beans or peas and shake it.
- Different dried objects will make different sounds.
- Different tubes/boxes or small plastic snap shut boxes will also make different sounds.
- Make sure to glue or tape the lid securely (if it isn't a snap shut box) or you will have a massive mess to clean up!

**Make it rain in a glass** (shaving foam; food colouring; a jar and water)

- Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgBo6P0rjoM>

**Make it rain in a jar** (ice; warm water; jar; plate)

- Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKY4ClOdom0>

**Sensory bin themed on the weather:** this picture may give you some ideas about creating a sensory bin at home.

All the materials in it (rice (dyed blue); pipe cleaners; blue stones; cotton wool; funnels; scoops etc. are widely available in shops like Mr. Price/art and hobby shops and supermarkets)



Picture reproduced from <https://teachingspecialthinkers.com/weather-activities-for-kids/> (used with permission)

**Sensory tub based on the theme of Spring to create at home:**

- Link: <https://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2011/03/spring-garden-sensory-tub.html>

**Sensory gardening tub using carrots:** <https://nurturestore.co.uk/spring-sensory-play-tub-carrots>

**Sensory Spring water play ideas:** <https://fun-a-day.com/scented-water-sensory-bin-spring/>

**Rainbow in a jar** (food colouring; washing up liquid; hand sanitizer; olive oil; jar)

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7I1FW2AZkQs>.

- If you glue the lid shut and use a screw top plastic jar (like from some nut butters; honey or plastic clear bottles) you can make this into a shakeable calm down jar for your child/student to play with.
- Add a small farm animal or favourite character into the jar before you seal it and watch it sink slowly to the bottom.
- Shine a torch through the plastic; wrap battery operated lights around the bottle; look at the bottle with a torch or other lights in a darkened area e.g. under a duvet or in a fort the child has made or as part of the nightly bedtime routine.

**Home-made playdough** (flour; salt; warm water; food colouring; oil)

- Link: <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/playdough-recipe>
- You can add spring smells with essential oils or herbs and spices if you have them into different batches. Food colouring can also be used to give batches different colours.

**Using food to dye playdough** (blueberries; turmeric; beetroot etc.)

- Link: <https://theimaginationtree.com/natural-dyes-for-play-dough/>

**How to make a stress/squeezy ball:**

- Put some dried rice or dried peas into a clean plastic bottle and fit a balloon over the top of the bottle.
- Turn the bottle upside down and fill the balloon with the dried items.
- Tie off the balloon and hey, presto, a squeezy stress toy.
- You can also partially inflate a balloon and wrap it in an onion net. Squeeze the balloon and watch as parts of it bulge through the onion net.

There are lots more homemade sensory items available to view here with easy how to videos for adults to follow: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cih4U17ph8A>