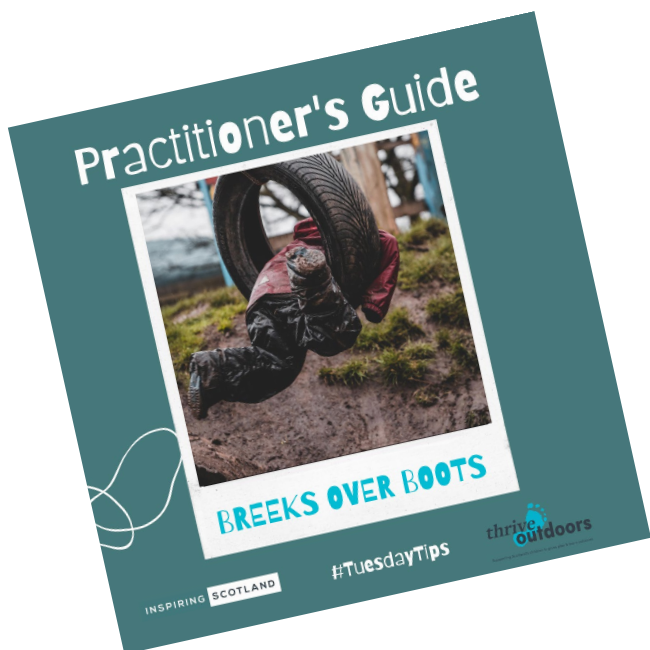


# A Practitioner's Guide to OUTDOOR PLAY BASED LEARNING 'WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT'

## What are the top must-have tips for Outdoor ELC?

We asked outdoor practitioners from across the country for their ultimate all time TOP TIP. For tips that save your socks and your sanity, look no further!

### "Put yer breeks over yer wellies"



Also known as 'Mairi's Mantra.' We know it can look much tidier with waterproofs tucked neatly into wellies, we know the elastic strap looks like it should go over your sock, BUT, this is a sure fire way for big and little feet to get very wet, very quickly. One giant puddle or a good downpour and the result is soggy socks and cold feet. The best way to prevent this is to leave the waterproof trousers **outside** of the welly. The trousers will get wet, they will get very muddy, but by doing this the trousers keep the human inside

them toasty and dry. Go on, give it a try!

Mairi is part of the Thrive Outdoors team at Inspiring Scotland.

## How to fix wet wellies, wet socks and cold feet

OK, so you forgot to put the waterproofs over the wellies (see Tip #1)...and guess what? You have a puddle in each welly, wet socks and cold feet. And possibly a few tears. Dawn from Mucky Boots shares her 'wet feet fix', you will need:

1. Dog poo bags or plastic sandwich bags (not zip lock!) for little feet
2. Small bin liners for grown up feet
3. Dry socks
4. A dry hand towel or paper towels

Find a seat, (this is so much harder standing up), take off one welly, tip out the water, **dry the foot**, pop a dry sock on. Then **cover the dry sock** in a bin liner/poo bag and put the welly back on. Repeat with the other foot. Problem solved - dry warm feet and no need for spare boots



## All day play on 3 resources



**What would you take out to play, if you could only take 3 things?**

**A ball of string  
Scissors  
A basket**

With these 3 simple resources you can have all day endless play and adventure.

**How?**

Children can use the basket to gather items for discussion (individually in turns, or as a group by dropping things into the basket. It can be a house for

insects, a magic basket that holds lots of secrets, it can carry worries (where children are anxious or scared), it can hold ideas or answers to a hundred questions.

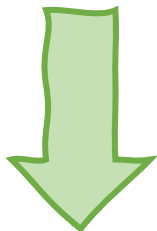
String can be used as a maze, to build wigwams with twigs, it can be cut to different lengths to measure things in the natural world developing numeracy and language skills (find things longer than/shorter than the piece of string). It can join friends who hold an end each, it can tie up any number of broken things that help develop life skills and coping mechanisms.

Stories can be told using any one of (or all 3 resources).. 'Once upon a time there was a rabbit who found a ball of string...'

Scissors can be used when introducing basic gardening skills – to cut herbs, extend the learning by smelling and identifying. Deadhead your flowers, extend the learning by asking 'why do we only cut off the dead flowers?' Cut a selection of stems and talk about what's inside, why are some rough and some smooth, why are some wet inside and some dry? Ask how food gets from the root to the flower. Of course, you can use the scissors to cut the string, children can 'pretend cut' (where no more scissors are available) then discuss the consequences of cutting. What would happen if everyone cut all the flowers? What do plants and trees actually do? (You are nailing the learning for sustainability goals AND developing environmental awareness and responsibility).

## Shelter me quick! Bungee & paracords

**These are great** for tying up your tarps with cold, wet hands! Karen from Greenbank Woodland Play is a bungee fan. For a full range of 'Tarp Tips' see another recent edition of Practitioner tips



<https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/publication/a-practitioners-guide-tarp-tips/>

## Music CAN save the moment



**Outdoor ELC is about benefitting** from fresh air, exercise, connecting with nature and learning about our planet. In other words, improving health, wellbeing through the outdoors. This doesn't mean we have to leave all technology behind. Hamish from Baltic Street Adventure Nursery, carries a portable speaker to link to a playlist of the children's favourite tunes. When the mood needs lifting (for staff or children), music can save the moment. Children often respond quickly and positively to music they like or can identify with. We also know that staff and children at Baltic Street know a few dance moves. Don't believe us? Watch this:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uURSCUMjCI>

## Layer up

**We talk about clothes A LOT** in outdoor ELC. So, if you are new to spending more than 20 minutes playing outdoors, this tip is for you. Get your layers on. Don't stress about being ready to climb Everest, simple is good. Zoe from Earthtime says 'try and avoid getting cold in the first place, it's much harder to get warm once you are cold so, get the base layer right – a fabric that wicks away water (sweat!), then add a fully waterproof outer layer **with a hood**, and fill up the middle bits with what you have at home.'



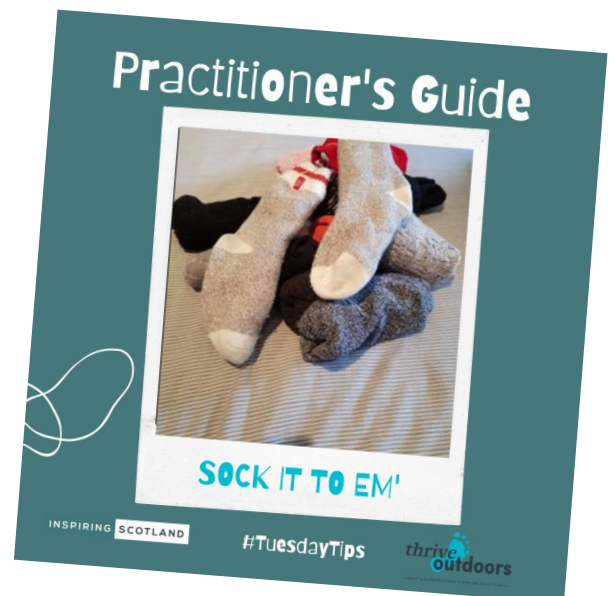
## Make it with mud



**One of the best things about outdoor play** is mud. Embrace mud and the possibilities for play and learning are invaluable. Claire from Mucky Boots loves the stuff. She suggests if we can't find it, create it, then wallow in it, her favourite mud play is to make bottom prints! You can make pies, potions, lotions, make it wet, dry, crumbly, slurpy. You can even bury yourself in it for the fun of it.

## Toasty Toes

**We have been told** 'never underestimate the importance of warm feet' (and hands). For this you need great socks and gloves. They don't have to be super expensive, but they do have to be thermal. Good socks are cosy and like your base layer, wick away sweat. **Wearing socks** keeps your feet dry and prevents conditions such as chaffing and athlete's foot. Going sockless can cause blisters or sores on the foot. Also, smells can develop if you don't wear socks, remember - your feet have a lot of sweat glands. Victoria from Baltic Street Adventure Nursery regularly darns her socks – yes, these are actually **her socks**.



## Baling twine – The ultimate fix



A favourite 'go to' for our rural practitioners is - baling twine. Deborah from the Thrive Outdoors Team at Inspiring Scotland is a baling twine fan, 'What else can tie up your grass skirt, your bra strap and your exhaust? It can be a belt, a collar (for stray animals), it can be steering on a go kart, a lead rope. You can plait it, wisp with it, knit with it, we even think you can skip with it (plaited), you can **measure** with it, fix fences, hang ANYTHING from it...' We tend to agree!

If you have top tips you would love to share, please contact us on: Facebook @ThriveOutdoorsScot, Twitter @Thrive\_Outdoors or by email [Jo@inspiringscotland.org.uk](mailto:Jo@inspiringscotland.org.uk)

### Very special thanks to:

Emma, Claire and Dawn from Mucky Boots <https://www.muckyboots.org/>

Hamish and Victoria from <http://www.balticstreetadventureplay.co.uk/>

Zoe from <https://earthtime.co.uk/>

Karen from <https://www.woodland-play.co.uk/>

Mairi and Deborah from <https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/our-funds/thrive-outdoors/>