

Helpful Weather Tips for Outdoor Play and Learning

"There's no such thing as bad weather!" is a firmly believed philosophy in the Forest and Nature School approach. Play happens in all types of weather! So much learning and growth emerges from interacting with various weather patterns and temperatures. Children and educators/parents/caregiver begin to normalize checking in with each other, listening to their hearts, bodies, and minds, and using language to help them name what they are feeling. Experiencing different weather conditions can strengthen our love, care, and connection to the land and the environment.

With that, there is always the possibility of inclement or extreme weather - it is something you will most likely encounter when taking learning outdoors. It is important to establish with your team some inclement/extreme weather policies and procedures - whether that be emergency meeting zones, designated shelter spaces, cancellations of programs (extreme wind/cold/heat), and other safety protocols depending on your region.

Something you can do, if it is available to you, is to download a weather tracking application. [Environment Canada](#) and/or [The Weather Network](#) are great apps to monitor weather/temperature and receive warnings/alerts to assist your team in making safe, smart and informed choices when it comes to program decisions.



Here are some possible strategies to help you navigate certain weather conditions in outdoor play:

Extreme Heat

PREVENTION of heat-related injuries/illnesses is key!
Extreme heat may be classified as 30 C.

PREPARE:

- **STAY HYDRATED!** Ensure access to water sources (jugs, [dromedary bags](#), extra water bottles, watering cans and spray bottles) for drinking and for cooling skin/washing hands.
- Establish a habit/routine of drinking water all together, and individually. **REFILL, REFILL, REFILL** water bottles! Make sure there is a main source of water to use as a refill site.
- **WEAR HATS!** Everyone. Educator team, children, families.
- Continually monitor the children for signs and symptoms of dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat-related illnesses, etc.
- Seek space with shade and slow down! No need to be moving fast all day long! Rest is important. If shade is not available to you, try not to go out during the heat of the day. Or, [set up a tarp for shade](#).
- See FAQ resource ("Weather" section) for additional information.



Wind

- Monitor the wind speeds and direction closely (via a weather radar app, if available).
- Complete a [Daily Site Risk Assessment \(p. 53\)](#) wherein you inspect the stability of trees and branches near by your shelter space.
- If there are extreme winds, stay close to/inside a shelter space (use your discretion and judgement).
- If the winds are strong, but minor, seek out play spaces that are mostly clear from trees or heavy branches, i.e. grassy fields with no overhanging branches or objects that could potentially injure someone.
- In the event of a tornado watch or warning, deliberate amongst your team and create a policy wherein you have an emergency plan. Perhaps that includes establishing a designated emergency meeting spot(s), a secure shelter, and a protocol for action, wherein you may have to contact families and inform them of updates.



Rain

- Be prepared with extra gear (socks, mittens, boots, etc.).
- Bring a handful of single-use bags. These are helpful as protective barriers in rubber boots to keep socks dry.
- Tarps are handy. They serve as great protection from the rain! [Here's a video tutorial on how to set up a tarp.](#)



Thunderstorms

- Ensure you have a shelter for protection in the event of lightning and/or heavy wind/rain storms.
- Stock that shelter space with things to do inside (arts, crafts, books, puzzles, blocks, etc.) so you can wait out the storm until it is safe to go outside again.



Extreme Cold

PREVENTION of cold-related injuries/illnesses is key!
(Extreme cold may be classified as -25 C).

MAINTAIN WARMTH

- Layers of clothing that cover the skin (you want to limit skin exposure). Materials to wear that are best for keeping warm include wool, synthetic, and fleece.
- Monitor exposed skin, constantly assess the children and watch for early signs of frostbite, hypothermia, cold-related illnesses, etc.
- Bring EXTRA gear with you (mittens, socks, neck warmers, hats, etc.)
- Hand warmers and feet warmers are excellent for instant warmth relief!
- Stay and play close to a shelter area (for warming breaks).
- See FAQ resource ("Weather" section) for additional information.

