

# Ready for Babies?

## The Outdoor Environment

### What are the Benefits?

**Fresh air, sunshine, open spaces to crawl and roam around and exposure to nature provides opportunities for babies to learn and grow.**

During the first three years of life brain synapses form at a rapid rate. A stimulating, sensory environment can help children to understand and make sense of the world around them. Babies are more receptive to outdoor sounds and changes in light which help to stimulate eye and brain development. Listening to noises in nature allows infants to respond by turning their eyes or head and reacting excitedly. Every season brings changes in temperature and different smells which provides us with opportunities for babies to explore different sensations and stimuli.

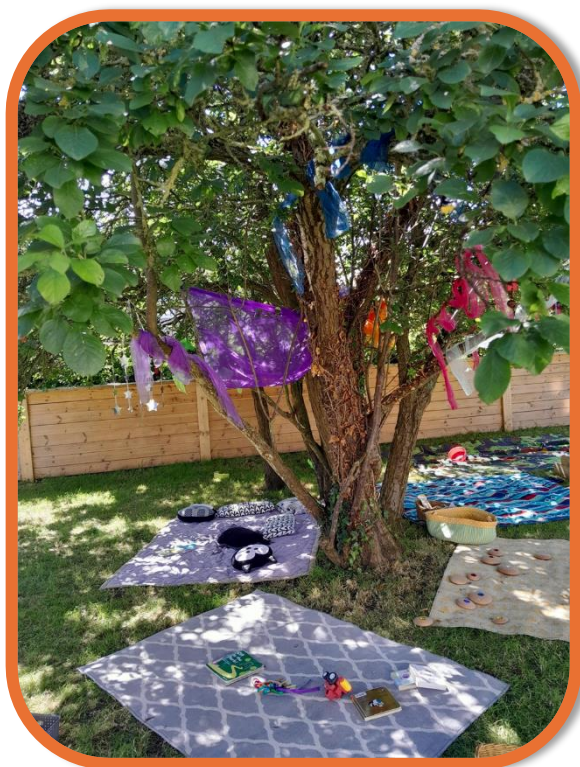


The outdoors is a very special place for babies, where staff can support and enable babies to thrive. Each settings outdoor area will be unique.



Placing babies on the ground in the outdoor environment can be a lovely, sensory experience. As infants lie on the blanket practitioners can point out moving leaves and talk about the different sounds

that can be heard within nature. Babies will enjoy reaching for blades of grass and letting their hands brush across the ground. Wind chimes complement natural sounds and can be made and hung, offering babies an interesting source to focus on. Babies who sleep outdoors experience the calming effects of nature and can often sleep for longer.



Camomile can be grown as a fragrant welcome mat into the garden, or a soft sensory carpet perfect for a baby exploring the world outside. [Morehavens Camomile Lawns](#)

Outdoor terrain offers many challenges for moving infants. In contrast to the smooth, level surface of indoor environments babies will need to adapt to hard/soft surfaces where conditions can be warm or cold and the ground can slope and dip. Babies begin to develop balance, stability and coordination by conquering slippery mud, wet grass, wood chip, sand and woodland floor.

Playground mounds and tunnels allow babies to practise moving over uneven terrain whilst experiencing changing environmental factors. Over time, movements will become more refined as balance and coordination improve.





## Getting the Environment right

When planning for the outdoor environment, consider the space you have and how best it can be utilised to meet the needs of babies:

- Is there a sand or water area?
- Is there a space for sitting and looking at books?
- Are there wheeled toys?
- Are there objects for rolling and throwing?
- Are there opportunities for music or sounds?
- Are there tools or objects for exploration (pulleys, ramps, pipes)?
- Are there materials for art or writing?
- Are there plants or a garden?
- Are there opportunities to take walks?

Provide opportunities and encouragement to promote sensory motor development as babies safely explore the environment with their hands, mouths and bodies.

[Babies and toddlers outdoors - Early Education \(early-education.org.uk\)](http://early-education.org.uk)

## Making your outside area safe

Having a risk assessment in place will ensure that all aspects of safety have been considered and risk rated, and measures have been taken to provide a safe and stimulating environment.

- **Soft Landings:** opt for locations with grassy grounds or soft sand, reducing the risk of injuries from falls.
- **Shaded Areas:** Direct sun exposure can be intense even on cooler days. Look for places that offer ample shade under trees or canopies.
- **Noise Levels:** Overwhelming noise can be distressing for infants. Choose relatively quiet spots where the sounds of nature dominate.
- **Safe Boundaries:** While allowing babies to roam and explore is essential, ensure the location has defined boundaries like fences or natural barriers. Some settings will have a baby room with their own exclusive outdoor provision. However, a safe baby can be created within the existing outdoor provision.



## Special thanks to the following settings for sharing their outdoor environment:

Yorley Barn Nursery- Little Cornard

Woodpeckers Nursery- Sudbury

Colourbox Montessori Baby room at the nest - Barrow

*Colourbox Montessori baby room The Nest:*

*“Our outdoor provision offers the babies the chance to become directly involved with the world. It enables holistic learning across all areas, blending physical, communication and sensorial learning into one enhanced experience. The outdoor area is ambitiously designed to challenge the babies’ development, whilst providing a safe environment where typical indoor routines such as sleeping, and mealtimes can also be implemented”.*

*Further Information:*

<https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/eyfs-best-practice-all-about-outdoor-provision-for-under-threes>

[Froebel Trust | A life ‘in and with nature?’ An exploration of...](#)