Great activities to get children playing outdoors

Scavenger hunt

Prepare a list of items to be found (not bought!) The list can be words or pictures or both. You could have a nature theme, a magical one or a random one. Depending on where you are and how confident the children are, the game can be in a defined area such as a garden or park or could encourage roaming in the local neighbourhood or woods. Usually hunts are done in small teams or pairs and you have to prove you have found the items by ticking them on a list. If the children have mobile phones they can, take photos when they find items. Here are a few ideas to get you started. Children will probably make better lists.

Nature scavenger hunt

An oak leaf, an acorn, a dandelion, a pinecone, animal tracks, a rubbing of a bark, a cobweb, the sound of birdsong, a puddle, a splat of bird poo, a daisy.

Magical scavenger hunt

Something of the brightest blue, a lucky charm, a creepy spider's web, a four-leaf clover (or three if you can't find four!), something a bit scary, faery footsteps.

A neighbourhood scavenger hunt

Something you can recycle, trash to put in the bin, something pretty, different colours of front doors, the nicest garden, a manhole cover, a post box, a lamppost, a gate, a statue. Remind children to use all their roads safety skills.

Capture the flag

Split the group into two teams. Each team has a flag (or a jumper or whatever) at their base. The aim of the game is to run into the other team's base, capture their flag and make it safely back to your own base. You can tag 'enemy' players and send them to your jail. If someone in their own team manages to get close enough to tag them, they can get out of jail. (Usually the rule is you can only free one person at a time. Sometimes it's played that all the people in jail can hold hands and make a chain stretching out of jail. That makes it easier to tag them free).

You need a large group and two things to use as flags.

Shadow tag/tig

In this version of tag/tig, you tag each other's shadow with your feet. A sunny day is best! It's harder nearer mid-day when shadows are short and wild on winter days when you can have really long shadows!
No equipment needed and as many players as you like.

Kick the can

One person or a team of people is 'it'. Put a can in the middle of the playing area. Choose an area for the jail. The other people run off and hide while the 'it' covers his or her eyes and counts to ten. "It" then tries to find everyone. If someone is tagged by 'it' they go to the jail. If one of the un-captured players manages to kick the can, the captured players are released. The game is over once everyone has been caught and is in jail.
All you need is a can and some people.

Is everyone included?

Every group has children with different ages, abilities and preferences when they are playing. There are lots of ways to adapt games so no-one is left out. For example, reduce the pace by using a soft ball instead of a bouncy one, use sensory clues in a scavenger hunt, make sure instructions are really clear, buddy up if some children are less confident, pair fast runners with slower ones, pair older children with younger ones, use fun symbols, badges or flags to indicate who is 'it' or where bases and dens are.