



So you want to know more about...

# Outdoor Play

## The Great Outdoors

What's so great about it? What's not! Outdoor play gives children fresh air, space to move, nature to explore, and a host of other exciting learning opportunities. These kids aren't just swinging and sliding. Take a look at our playgrounds, and you'll find:

**Scientists:** weather watchers, engineers, collectors, measurers, experimenters, gardeners.

**Athletes:** runners, swingers, throwers, catchers, crawlers, bikers, jumpers and climbers.

**Artists:** painters, drawers, observers, collage makers.

**Politicians:** leaders, followers, team players, crusaders, negotiators.

**Actors:** comedians, drama kings and queens, supporting casts, directors and stage hands.

**Explorers:** diggers, finders, hidiers, seekers, geographers!

**Mathematicians:** counters, sorters, calculators and dividers.

That's a lot of work going on, and kids need plenty of time to make meaningful connections in all these areas and more.

Outdoor play is not just free play, though we do allow the children more self-directed time outside because of all the built-in opportunities. We frequently take our more traditional curricular activities outside

when weather permits, because outside is where kids really want to be.

Worry about "bad" weather is usually an adult projection. We don't like rain because we don't like carrying galoshes to work or it messes up our hair. We do understand! We're not asking **you** to jump in mud puddles or make snowballs, but we do need your help. We really appreciate it when you dress your child in appropriate gear for all seasons. Turn this page over for a detailed list of all-weather tips, and let the fun begin!

## What About the Weather?

State licensing regulations require that children in childcare go outside every day, weather permitting. Luckily, Michigan only offers a few days each year when the weather is too extreme to allow much or any outdoor play. Here are the times we won't go outside for safety reasons:

**Cold temperatures:** If the wind chill is below zero, no one goes out. Babies and toddlers go out in cold weather as long as they are comfortable. Preschoolers, who are more active, usually stay out for longer periods of time.

**Hot weather:** If the heat is extreme, we stay out of the midday sun and use water play and plenty of drinks to stay cool. Babies always stay out of direct sun.

### Further reading

- *The Snowy Day*, by Ezra Jack Keats
- *Quick as a Cricket*, by Don and Audrey Wood
- *Come On, Rain!* by Karen Hesse
- *The Jacket I'll Wear in the Snow*, by Shirley Neitzel

# All the Gear That's Fit to Wear!

## Spring and Fall

- Rain boots
- Windbreaker
- Raincoat
- Fleece jacket
- Mud (**waterproof**) pants, occasionally
- Light mittens or gloves (2 pairs)
- Light hats

## Summer

- Swimsuit or swim diaper
- Sunhat or baseball cap
- Water shoes or waterproof sandals
- Sturdy shoes for climbing
- Cotton clothing
- (We provide sunscreen)

## Winter

- **Waterproof** coat with hood
- **Waterproof** snow pants or snowsuit

- **Waterproof** mittens or gloves (2 pairs)
- Fleece or knit hat
- **Snow** boots
- Onesies/long underwear under clothing
- Slippers or indoor-only shoes.

Many parents find it convenient to have two sets of those clothing items that are often wet at the end of the day. For example, they rotate two swimsuits or pairs of gloves.

We recognize that quality outdoor gear is an investment, but it is well worth the cost both for the amount of use it gets and the comfort it affords. Garage sales are a great place to find superior gear at affordable prices. Otherwise, try outdoor clothing stores and catalogs. Discount department stores also have good selections.

*Wherever you shop, remember to look for items that fit well and are waterproof.*

## Frequently Asked Questions

**My child is not feeling well, can you keep him inside today?** Children need to be well enough to participate in all facets of our program to come to the center. If your child has a chronic illness that is affected by being outdoors, bring specific written instructions from your doctor to discuss with the director.

**I don't want my child going out in this cold/wet weather because it will make her sick.** Weather doesn't make children sick, germs do. There is actually a lower concentration of germs outdoors than inside! That said, severe weather *can* lower people's immunity if they are not properly dressed. If you forget your child's gear one day, we have spares to keep them comfortable and dry. Your child, though, will prefer wearing his own.

**I want my child to be learning. Isn't this too much free play?** Our programs offer a balance of structured and self-directed play, both indoors and

out. Children are kinetic learners who, if too confined, may begin to behave disruptively due to excess energy or boredom.

**I think outdoor play is great but I don't want all that muddy mess in my car or home.** We encourage you to leave the messy outdoor gear at the center during the week. Having spare sets of mittens and even boots to use for back and forth is a big help. Save the fancy coats for home use, and save yourself a lot of grief!

**My child's mittens keep disappearing. Why can't you keep track of them?** We do our best, but our priority is interacting with children. If the mittens fit well, are clearly labeled, and are clipped on for toddlers, they are much less likely to get lost. Here again, spare pairs are helpful. LABEL EVERYTHING!