

Bears and Dens

Activity

Resource:

Beyond the Walls: Activities for the Outdoors

Grade(s): 1 2 3

Division(s): Primary

Setting: DPA

Season: Fall

Activity Goal

Participants engage in moderate to vigorous physical activity in a fall environment to enhance their fitness and overall health and wellness.

For participant safety, please review the contents of the [Beyond the Walls: Safety Considerations](#) page for information on Safety Standards, Fall Safety Considerations, and Outdoor Playing Areas and Surfaces.

Equipment

Cones/pylons to mark the designated playing area (optional)

Before Play

- Review the safety rules and activity instructions with participants prior to the activity.
- Establish the boundaries for the designated playing area and share them with participants.

- Initiate a discussion with participants about the natural habitats of various woodland creatures. Begin with the creatures who may make their homes in and around the playing area. Explain to students that a bear's natural habitat is a den. Bears create their den in the fall in hollow trees, under tree stumps and beneath brush piles of leaves and fallen trees in preparation for the cold winter.
- Divide participants into groups of three. Explain to participants how to create a 'den' - two participants face each other and hold hands above their heads or hold their arms above their heads reaching toward each other without making contact. The third participant is the bear who stands in the centre of the den. Designate a few extra participants as bears who have no den.
- Explain to participants that they will follow your instructions. Bears, (including those who do not have a den) must get from one den to another without being left out in the cold (like musical chairs). When a bear is left out in the cold or a den doesn't find a bear, or both, they complete an activity of their choice to stay warm (Jumping Jacks, hopping or skipping in place, high knees). Agree on the number of repetitions or length of time before starting the game.

During Play

- Give one of the following instructions to participants.
 - Switch dens: the bears must leave their den and find a new den.
 - Switch bears: the dens must leave and find a new bear.
 - Bears tag a den: the bears leave their den, tag one den participant and take their spot as the den. The previous den participant becomes a new bear and must find a den. Remind participants that a tag is a touch on the back, shoulders, or arms not a push, punch, or grab.

After Play

Use the following prompts for participants to reflect on ways to be active in fall and invite others to participate in outdoor activities throughout the year.

Question prompts:

- What did you enjoy most about this activity?

- How might you change this activity to encourage others to join you to stay active outdoors during the fall?
- How can you incorporate physical activity outdoors into your daily routine before and after school?

Adaptations

Consider these tips to maximize the challenge and the fun for participants.

- Challenge bears to dance or bounce up and down as they move from den to den.
- Add more bears to make it more challenging to find a den. Have the new bears start with their backs together in the middle of the playing area.
- Encourage bears to find a den that isn't right beside their existing den.
- Add a few bees who attempt to sting (tag) bears when they are not in a den. If stung by a bee, the bear must perform a physical activity before returning to play. Remind participants that a tag is a touch on the back, shoulders, or arms not a push, punch, or grab.
- If it is noticeable that some participants haven't been moving for a few rounds, announce 'climate change' and every bear and den participant must do the physical activity.

Modifications

Consider these tips to maximize inclusion and fun for all participants.

- For participants with mobility challenges, have them remain in their own den and invite other bears to join them as a safe place to rest.
- Consider inclusive approaches to increase or decrease the challenge to find a role for every participant and to encourage full participation.