

# Teacher Resource: Natural Shelters

## Natural Shelters

### Brush or thickets

**How might they be used:** They block the rain, wind or provides shade.

**Safety precautions you might take before using the shelter:** Choose the side of the brush that is on the calm side (leeward) of the wind.

### A bushy tree canopy

**How might it be used:** It blocks some heat from the sun and provides shade.

**Safety precautions you might take before using the shelter?** Check the area for poison ivy or other hazards that may be around if you have to leave the trail or go into a wooded area to find shade. If there's lightning, find a shelter other than trees.

### Fallen logs and trees

**How might they be used?** They can provide some protection from the wind and weather and a dry space to rest.

**What are some safety precautions you might take before using the shelter?** Make sure there isn't any danger of them falling further down or moving.

### Hollows in trees

**How might they be used?** They can provide some protection.

**What are some safety precautions you might take before using the shelter?** They are natural shelters for animals, so check them out before using them.

## Rock formations/Rock overhangs

**How might they be used?** They can block the wind or provide some shade. There can be enough room to lie down or be used as a natural wall to build a shelter with tarps.

**What are some safety precautions you might take before using the shelter?** Check the area carefully for loose overhead rocks to make sure they won't move.

## Caves

**How might they be used?** They provide protection from all the elements.

**What are some safety precautions you might take before using the shelter?** Make sure there is enough air to breathe, that the cave is not inhabited by animals, and that there are no toxic animal droppings in the cave.

## Valleys, ravines and depressions in the ground

**How might they be used?** Low areas can be less windy so they provide shelter from the wind.

**What are some safety precautions you might take before using the shelter?** Watch out for water and flooding.

## Natural Materials for Shelters

### Large branches

**How might they be used?** They can be used as a frame.

**What are some safety precautions you might take before using the shelter?** They need to be strong enough to support an adult's weight which is comparable to the weight of the shelter materials these branches need to support. They must not be rotten.

## Leaves, grass

**How might they be used?** They can be used for insulating.

**What are some safety precautions you might take before using the shelter?** Make sure there are enough layers to keep heat in and provide protection from rain and wind.

## Pine needles

**How might they be used?** They can be used as cushioning and insulation from the ground.

**What are some safety precautions you might take before using the shelter?** Layer enough needles to provide insulation from the cold ground.

(Teacher Resource: Outdoor Life, 2021; ALDERLEAF Wilderness College, 2021)

## References

- Outdoor Life. (2021). [9 Natural Shelters that will Save Your Life.](#)
- ALDERLEAF Wilderness College. (2021). [Basic Wilderness Survival Shelters.](#)