



Muddy Phonics Games

BEE GREEN AND ONLY PRINT IF YOU HIVE TO :)

USE THE ATTACHED HANDBOOK TO GUIDE YOU WITH SAFETY AND
USING OUR APPROACH

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Sharing the Muddy Love :)

Welcome



Message from our Founder - Sarah Seaman

Welcome :)

This pack will help restore purpose to your teaching and show you how getting a little messy can make outdoor learning more memorable for your students. If you're unfamiliar with the Muddy Puddle Teacher Approach then please refer to our handbook which will guide you through our Muddy ways. On this page you'll see the three Muddy Ms. These are our core values that remind us to give children the outdoor experience that they deserve. It can be very tricky at times not to let your indoor traits spread to the outdoors. We encourage you to use our tips and the attached handbook as these will help keep you focused and shed light when you need it. Have fun and enjoy getting Muddy!

Sarah :)



Muddy active



On cold days you'll want to keep the children even more active so don't be afraid to have little breaks where necessary. At Muddy HQ we call this 'dispersing'. We let the children go for a jog around the yard or jump on the spot and do star jumps if space is limited. This gets children warmed up and gives them that burst of energy they sometimes need to focus on more challenging work.

Some of the activities below require asking the children to sit down and do work on the floor. Get them to run around while they search and collect items such as sticks, leaves and mud. You can ask them to run, hop, skip or jump. Make it more challenging and increase the pace by putting a timer on how long they have to collect the items.

Muddy nature



We believe in BALANCE and while our goal is to promote the use of natural resources, we understand that this may be restrictive at times and not always possible in every lesson. But we do want to encourage you to use natural resources and most of our ideas will make this very easy for you. Why is this so important? Because it gives children the chance to experience and touch nature, all while getting good bacteria into their systems. It's also a much better sensory experience for children if they use natural resources rather than plastic. And above all, it encourages sustainability and teaches the future generation to respect the environment.

Muddy well-being



The Muddy Puddle Approach is passionate about school being a happy and safe space for children. Learning is such a gift and should always be fun for children of all ages. So try to distinguish between indoor and outdoor activities. Avoid using indoor practices that can often segregate groups, such as differentiating, grouping by ability or gender, competitions or stars of the day. Instead, let the children be children. Give them the chance to simply enjoy learning and achieve together without rewards. It will take some time to shift your mindset and teaching style, but don't worry. It will be worth it once you see the results!

Before you start



Summary

This engaging and active pack of Phase Two phonics games will keep your class learning while having lots of fun! You'll find games sorted according to the natural resources required, such as leaves, stones and sticks. This pack also includes a sample home learning sheet which you can tailor and edit accordingly to complement the lessons or learning you're already doing. Try to involve parents in these activities as it will help them understand why it's important for them and their children to be outside enjoying that crisp air.

These games can be used to support your planning and intervention work. They're also great for inspiring your class or group to simply go outside for 20 minutes. Our activities are designed to be multisensory and can be easily tailored to individual needs. Lower abilities will be given opportunities to work independently and our innovative ideas will ensure they remain engaged. Our activities are also suitable for higher abilities and ensure more challenging opportunities across various subjects like science.

Weather back-up plan

At Muddy HQ, we're firm believers that weather only really gets a bit impossible if there's heavy rain or lots of wind. So rather than cancelling your plans, embrace the weather! Here are some ideas you can tuck up your sleeve for when the weather decides to turn on you.

Day phonics – Give children a set of watercolours and paint brushes. Ask the children to dip them into puddles and write the letters they've been working on across the walls, floor and benches. Or, get them to jump in puddles while they sound out words. Encourage the children to make mud paint, mud and puddle water, find sticks and write Muddy words.

Windy day phonics – Ask the children to write words on leaves. Do this inside if it's too windy. The children can then have lots of fun throwing them in the air and watching the direction of the wind. Get the children to retrieve the leaves, read what's on each leaf and then thread each leaf onto sticks. You can also get the children to try making a windy day phonics wand. Ask the children to tie a string to a stick on one end and then on the other end, get them to tie on a leaf. Using a marker pen, get the children to write a letter on the leaf and then hold it up in the air, watching it move in the wind.

Help for continuous provision

We've designed this planning so that by now children will have had some exposure to making things or participating in activities that they're able to mimic and repeat in their free play or continuous provision. If your children are older or you don't have continuous outdoor provision, think about integrating it into playtimes and lunchtimes. All the resources we've recommended are waterproof so they can be left outside in all weathers and pose no harmful threat to nature.

Kick off your session with the phonics pit game. This activity requires an outdoor phonics area along with a bucket, tuff spot, tyres or a raised bed. Then get children to fill their bucket with a natural material of their choice, such as sand, mud, water or rocks. If you see your children losing interest, change the content as you see fit. Then write letters on leaves and rocks using a marker pen. You might want to use an acrylic pen if you want them to last in all weathers. Place them deep into your container and give the children some spoons or other apparatus to retrieve them. Switch up this activity by replacing your leaves and rocks with shells, yoghurt pots or glass jar lids. Involve the children by getting them to make them themselves. Or create a theme to the activity, such as pirates. Bury the letters on bottle top lids for treasure. If your theme is dinosaurs, use stones as bones.



Resources

In our Muddy schools, we use jute bags to store our resources. We have a different bag for different subjects. Why? Because they're breathable, eco-friendly and durable in wet weather. Store your bag in a warm place to ensure it dries and you can easily brush off the mud. It's also a nice sidestep away from plastic bags. Muddy phonics jute bags can be bought in our shop. We also sell phased planning for those wanting a more structured plan.

Games using leaves



Leaf safety

Leaves generally don't pose much of a danger to children. However, there are some important messages to relay. Encourage children not to put their hands in their mouths when they've picked or used leaves. Collecting leaves off the floor also has its dangers, especially if you're out and about. We want to show children a safe way to collect things off the floor so that they use this safe practice when they're not with us. In our Muddy schools our motto is 'feet first, then hands'. Get the children to dust the floor with their feet looking for dangers and then use their hands to collect the leaf.

The great leaf hunt

Think of leaves from now on as your outdoor paper. You can write anything on them - all you need is a marker pen, an acrylic pen or some nail varnish. It will make whatever you write on them last longer, even in very wet weather. Focus on the five letters you're working on and write one of these letters on each leaf. Do as many as you need, so that each child gets the chance to collect a minimum of two leaves. If the children can write the letters, get them to make them. It saves you time and gives them the chance to practise. Then hide the leaves in and around your outdoor space. Countdown from 10 and ask the children to find two leaves and bring them back to your Muddy camp (the hub where you teach from and the children return to each time after a lesson).

Each child then has to read their letters to a partner. Change this task slightly and make it into a sorting task. Draw five circles in chalk on the floor, writing the letter you want the children to put inside the circle. Then ask them to find the leaves and sort them into the right ring. Once the children have found the letters needed, ask the children to re-hide them and then repeat the exercise.

Leaf piles

Ask the children to find lots of leaves from your space and place them into one big pile. The educator then places leaves with all of the letters from phase two. You can get the children to complete this activity in small or large groups. Then get all the children to pick up the leaves and throw them in the air. When you're ready shout out a sound and get the children to work out that sound. Put the leaves back into a pile and repeat. This also works well for capital letters, tricky words and number recognition.

Muddy magic wands

Write the letters you're working on onto the leaves and hide them in your space but only hide them near natural objects. Then tell the children this when you ask them to hunt for the leaves. If you feel like experimenting, switch this game up by hiding the leaves on man-made materials, plastics and wood. It's a super science link and it teaches children about materials. The children then have to thread the leaves they find onto a stick. Once all of the children have some leaves on their stick, come together and stand in a circle. One at a time get them to pick up a leaf off their stick, read it and then throw it in the air. You can vary how you do this by putting the children in small groups or pairs. Repeat this task and get children to hide again. Make this task more challenging by asking the children to think of words that have the letter as an initial sound. Add some imaginary fun into this activity by getting children to pretend that their sticks are wands. Ask the children to collect the leaves using their sticks, then pick a leaf and get them to make a spell using the letter and its respective sound.

Leafy words

This activity can be used for practising letter recognition, reading and spelling words. Draw circles on the floor or use hoops and then write the letters inside the circles using chalk. In each ring, have lots of leaves that also have this letter written onto them. Start by asking the children to collect three letters, such as 's', 't' and 'a'. Then ask the children to experiment making CVC words. It's ok if children make nonsense words as this helps them to practise their reading skills and encourages them to have conversations about whether the word is real or not. Then structure the lesson by asking everyone to make a word, such as 'sat' or 'at'. Vary the set up of the lesson by asking the children to work in small groups and pairs. You can also try make this a spelling lesson. Do the same as above, using hoops with the lettered leaves inside. But this time don't tell the children what leaves to choose. Instead, ask the children to make the word, such as 'cat'. Then encourage them to find the correct letters and lay the word out in front of them.

Games using sticks



Stick safety

Sticks can become dangerous if children put sticks up high and aren't looking at the other children around them. The benefits, however, outweigh the small risks involved. Teaching children how to be safe with objects is a fantastic learning lesson. Instructions have to be repeated regularly. Don't assume that the children have got it. Keep reminding them. Use our Muddy schools sticks song: 'sticks stay low they tickle our toe, if they go high they poke us in the eye' before starting each activity.

Sticky sticks

For Muddy phonics we encourage children to make a sticky stick friend. This is simply a stick, decorated only by the child. It simply gives them ownership and companionship in their phonics learning. The sticky stick can be a natural and straightforward stick. Although we do find if the child has had some time to stamp their identity on it, it makes their involvement in the sessions a lot more powerful and memorable. Some children wrap wool or string round. Others tie, ribbons, tinsel and pipe cleaners on them. Some children want it to be a superhero while others prefer an object. Either way, don't use things that will fall off easily and harm the environment, such as googly eyes. You want something sturdy and durable that will last in all weathers. Make sure that the adults make one too and have one to teach and model with.

Sticky art

This activity is useful for teaching children capital letters and letter recognition. Ask the children to collect up lots of sticks and put them in a big pile at your Muddy camp. Then ask children to either make their letters using these sticks or give them letters to make. Encourage them to break the sticks up to help make bends in letters - it's also great for working those fingers! This activity works well on a small scale, either for children to work independently or in small groups. Alternatively, make giant letters by all working together.

Sticky sticks for reading

The Muddy sticky stick is a marvellous reading apparatus because it physically helps a child to segment and blend. It also has a sound attached to it that some children find necessary. For some children, the rhythm in reading is hard to create without hearing the sound of tapping. The way we use our sticky sticks for reading is that we tap for segmenting and scrape the stick on the floor for blending. The educator needs to model this first and then the children need to have a go practising on their own. You need a hard surface for this to work, so a wall or cement floor works best. Use chalk to write the word, then tap to segment and scrape at the end to blend the word. A game to play using this is to write lots of words in and around your space using chalk. For example, if a group is working on the letter 'p', use chalk to write 'p' words on the walls, floors and benches, such as 'pin' or 'pet'. Ask the children to use their sticky stick to find a word and read it. Then get them to find another one to read, tapping to segment and scrapping to blend as they go.

Sticky stick writing

One of the most amazing qualities of the sticky stick is that it encourages reluctant writers to write. Fine and gross motor skills come hand in hand. Both need to be well practised and developed before the writing stage. The sticky stick has powerful and magical qualities to help the development of this. If you have some reluctant learners who aren't ready to write, encourage these children to draw lines with the sticky stick, dipping it in the mud and making long lines across your setting. Draw 'X' marks and make trails that children can follow afterwards with their feet. These children can do this task while the others that are ready to practise letter formation move onto the below tasks. Starter tasks begin with teachers modelling to the children how to write letters in the air with their sticky stick. Then get the children to have a go. Use the sticky stick to write letters on each other's backs. Then move to dip the stick in the mud and write the letters on the floor, walls, benches and sheds. Write on wallpaper or large sheets of paper for this task. Or use puddles if it's raining. If your mud is dry make your mud paint, dirt and water in buckets. Remember to make big letters and small letters and get the children to walk up and down their letters afterwards. Get paints out and let the children dip their stick in the paint and write the letters on the floors and walls.

Games using stones



Stone safety

At Muddy schools we love stones because they challenge children's senses and present opportunities to teach children how to use heavy objects safely. Our favourite game for this is Muddy rock babies. Ask the children to pick a rock baby by bending their legs to squat down, putting their fingers underneath it slowly and then standing up. Then get the children to take two steps and if they feel the rock is too heavy, encourage them to place down the rock safely. Do this by bending their knees and slowly removing their fingers away. If the rock feels ok, then they can continue walking, hugging the rock baby to their chest with both hands. Go for a little walk so you can monitor how the children are holding the rock. Then get all the children to place down the rock safely. If you feel your group of children needs a lot of practice at this, let them have a rock baby each that they can practise with.

Writing stones

Stones are a wonderful multisensory and imaginary way for children to engage with writing. If you have children who aren't ready to write, let them mark their rocks by drawing a funny face or making the stones into monsters or bugs on the rocks. Use a marker pen and reuse the rocks by getting some sandpaper and filing off the letters. Let the kids do this part for you - it's good for their fine motor skills. If children are ready for letter formation, let them start by writing single letters on the rocks and do it more than once. Flip the rock over and do it on the other side. You can start your writing activity by getting the kids active first. Hide lots of plain rocks in your space and ask them to get three rocks and write 'i', 't' and 's' on them. Can they make a word using these three rocks? To make this task more difficult, ask the children to write the full word on a rock and then make small sentences with it. Try collecting the rocks using spoons - it's fun and the children will use fine motor skills to engage and extend their games with rocks.

Reading stones

Like the stick art mentioned above, you can also do a similar activity with rocks. Do small art tasks making letters out of the stones by laying them by one another. This works better with small rocks but you can also make some large letters as a group. Rocks, unlike sticks, can make small words if they're small enough. Then have fun making smiley faces and other creations. They'll still be practising the fine motor skills they need for writing and reading.

Tricky word stones

Give each child a selection of stones with letters on them and then let them puzzle together words. For example, give a child 's', 'a', 't', 'p', 'i' and 'n', and see if they can make small CVC words. Make sure you use one letter per stone. Use a variation of stone sizes as the children find that bit quite fun. A way to make this even more fun is to hide the rocks beforehand. Then ask the children to re-hide and play again. Stones also work amazingly well with small words written on them. For example, if you choose 'l', hide lots of rocks in your space with words that begin with 'l', such as lip, lid, lad, loo, lim, lur, lae. The children have to find the rocks and sort into two hoops distinguishing real and nonsense words. The stones can also be used as stepping stones. Ask the children to lay the stones out and read the letter, word or tricky word as they step on each stone. This activity also works well for pass the parcel. Pass several rocks around and when the educator stops singing the child with the rock has to say the tricky word, a letter, or segment and blend a word.

Cracking clay phonics

We love clay! It's great for messy fun and is so versatile. However, mud in the right consistency works a lot like clay too. You can use clay in several ways for phonics. Use it to make single sounds or flatten it and use a stick to write small words. Then stick it on a tree or somewhere high up where the children will see it again and again when they're outside playing or doing continuous provision. The more you do phonics outside and signpost learning, the more memorable the learning becomes.

“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”- Robert Swan, Author

Games using up-cycled materials



Umbrella teller

At Muddy HQ we love to use umbrellas with children. It takes good core strength to hold an umbrella and this is exactly what technology obsessed children need more of. Send a letter out to parents asking for any unused umbrellas or head to the product review page on our website to find our suggestions. However, what we really love about umbrellas is that they're quite similar to dry wipe board. You can write on the inside of them and on a rainy day this is a fun game to help children revise and revisit letters. Using a dry wipe pen, write numbers on the inside and allow small groups of children to huddle in them and read their letters. Alternatively, ask them to find letters you're looking for. Then swap with another group who may have a different set of letters. You can also get the children to write small words, letters or sentences in them! Even your most reluctant writers will want to have a go at this and it's such a good work out for their fine and gross motor skills.

Cardboard box chaos

This is a phonics lesson to never forget! You need to collect lots of cardboard boxes for this. Flatten and spread them all out. You'll need a day when it isn't raining so that you avoid a sloppy mess! Then get some crayons, charcoal or felt tip pens and let the children practise on the boxes. Or go BIG. Hand out some tape and as a class build a big structure, such as a phonics pirate ship or a random sculpture. You'll find that your children will be very eager to write on this! Hand out pens and dry wipe as these show up well. Ask the children to write words that start with 's', 't', 'p' or 'ph' depending on what you're working on. Then get the children to go round reading the words. Let them play and leave it out so they can go back to it in their free time and continue their phonics.

Wallpaper phonics

From now on, start collecting wallpaper. Send letters out to parents asking them to bring some in. Trust us, everyone has some. It's such an awesome material to use for outdoor, messy writing. Make mud paint by adding mud, water and a bit of washing up liquid to thicken it up. Then roll the wallpaper out and put half your class on one side and the other half on the other side. Then get them to start writing a sound, tricky word or small sentence. Just make sure you choose an appropriate brush. If you want to write sentences use a smaller tipped brush.

Phonics in a bottle

For this activity you'll need to collect lots of unwanted plastic bottles. Label the bottles with the sounds, words, pre-fixes and suffixes you're working on. Using a permanent marker, fill each bottle with a bit of sand and water. Then play water bottle skittles. Get the children to throw bean bags at the water bottles, aiming to knock them over. The children then have to think of a word that has those sounds before passing the bean bag to the next player. You can also place these bottles around your yard and leave a bit of chalk by each one. The children then have to race to each one, writing words that have that sound near it.

Smelly socks phonics

Start collecting socks! Our Muddy Puddle Teachers use socks A LOT! Not only does every family have socks to give you, but it's also a wonderful way of reusing something we have so much of. Something not a lot of us know is that a lot of water is used to make clothing. If we can do more to reuse items like this, we can have a positive impact on the environment and teach our children good sustainability. Hand out some socks to the children and encourage them to go all 'Art Attack' by making their sounds using the socks. If you have limited socks, ask children to work in small groups and get them to make their sound on the floor. In the end, get all the children to have a go at putting their socks together and making a small word. If you have no socks, don't worry. This activity also works well with lollipop sticks, sticks, leaves and stones.

Games reusing apparatus



Cones

We use cones a lot at Muddy HQ because often we turn up to settings that don't always have sticks, stones and leaves that are readily available. Cones are a really handy tool that you can use to make learning more active and engaging. You'll need one of those marvellous permanent markers we use so much. Write letters, words and punctuation on the cones. Then spread the cones around your space. You can then sort the cones into hoops depending on what criteria you want to work on. Or you can try this fun game! Choose three children and get each of them to wear a cone on their head. Give three children the letters 't', 'a' and 's' on their head and set out the other cones that have words on them. The other children then have to find a cone and work out which child's head it goes on. To make the game even more fun, ask the children who have the cone on their head to run away while the other children try to catch them before they can put their word on their head.

Parachutes

Parachutes tend to be used for the little ones rather than older children. But at Muddy HQ we think all children should enjoy learning and we're yet to meet a child that doesn't enjoy learning around a parachute. Never put anything heavy on the parachute and stay clear of mud as it can go in their eyes. Leaves are perfect for this game. Write letters on the leaves and put them on the parachute. Then let a few children jump on top of the parachute while the rest of the children flap it. The aim of the game is that the children have to catch the leaves, read out the letter and then find more. Change to words, suffixes and prefixes. As we've already mentioned, all of our activities are very versatile. You can even use this in maths once you get the Muddy hang of the way we do things.

Phonics races

Why do we just use bean bags for sports day? They're a great resource for active learning. You can use bean bags in many different ways. You can even write on them but remember it won't come off once you've done this. Alternatively, put sticky labels on them for this activity. Set the children up in a relay race type situation. Then hand them a bean bag and get children to write a tricky word on it. Children pass it to each other BUT before they pass it they have to put the tricky word into a sentence. You can also do this with several different sounds or words that they have to read before the bean bag is passed on. Another method is to play pass the parcel with the bean bags and as the bean bags go round, they say the initial letter. When it stops on them, they have to sound out and read the word. Or pass the word around and each time it gets to them, the children have to read the word. Make sure you have several on the go so that no-one is standing around for too long. Then say swap and get all the children to throw their bean bag into the middle of the circle, pick another one up and continue passing it around again.

Hoops

Hoops are a great resource for getting children to sort things in. Try some of these super phonics games. You can use hoops on tarmac and write letters inside using chalk. Then hide lots of leaves with words on and get the children to sort the initial letters. You can do a similar activity with prefixes and suffixes, using words with certain sounds like 'oo' and 'ee'. These are really useful for helping children to distinguish real and nonsense words. Shark island is a nice game we play a lot at Muddy HQ. Sort the letters, sounds and words in hoops. Then shout a sound and the children have to run to the hoop with the respective letter or sound.

Fun house phonics

For anyone that used to watch Fun House as a child, this one is for you. Spread several buckets around your space and fill with different muddy slop. This can be mud with water, sand with water, foam or cooked spaghetti! How many you have will depend on your class size. We recommend four children per bucket. Then add some sounds into the gloopy mess. Use leaves and a marker pen to write the sounds you want the children to work on and sprinkle a few of them into each bucket. Make sure there are enough for every child to get one. You can change this activity so that you use tricky words. Then at your base, have some hoops so that they can sort their letters or words into. You can have single sound sorting, tricky word sorting or real and fake words. The opportunities are endless and they love this!

Home learning



Guess what? Learning is fun!

Your child's setting is passionate about ensuring that children get outside and connect with nature. Apart from all the physical and mental health benefits, studies now show that children are smarter if they play outside! To help, your setting would really appreciate any cardboard boxes, water or pop bottles, bottle lids, glass jar lids and yoghurt pots you have. All these are very useful for imaginary play but also help to teach children about the importance of reusing before recycling.

Your Muddy task :)

Muddy magic wands

Go on a walk, find a stick and collect up lots of leaves. Find a dark coloured felt tip pen and add the sounds your child is working onto each individual leaf. Then thread the leaves onto the stick and get the children to run around making magic spells, each using the sound on the top leaf. Then take that leaf off and throw it away. Then move onto the next leaf.



“LIFE IS A JOURNEY,
NOT A DESTINATION.” –
RALPH WALDO
EMERSON

Did you know?

Studies have shown that children who play outside are smarter! Read this link to find out more.

<https://childmind.org/article/why-kids-need-to-spend-time-in-nature/>

Congratulations!



To

.....

You have been awarded the
MUDDY Phonics Award !



SignedDate.....

“LIFE IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION.” -RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Message for parents!

If your child likes to learn outside then
check out our parent packs at:
www.themuddypuddleteacher.co.uk