

## Whatever you like!

Want to build something else? Got a different idea? Build it!

Let your imagination run wild. In most woods you'll have all sorts of natural building materials available:

- Sticks
- Moss
- Leaves
- Bark
- Feathers
- Logs
- Lichen
- Seeds
- Mud
- Stones
- Earth
- Flower petals



What else can you find to build with...?

# Build



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Woodland adventure booklet



This booklet was made by staff at the Woodland Trust and Westonbirt Arboretum

The Woodland Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales (294344) and Scotland (SC038886) at Kempton Way, Grantham, NG31 6LL

Images: Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission photo libraries. Illustrations by David Hallewell.

## Giant nest

How to build a nest big enough for... YOU!

Parent birds do this in spring and they put a lot of effort into making nests that are strong and comfortable for their chicks.

Build your nest on the ground. Many larger birds like herons do this and you are even bigger than they are!

Stack sticks in a circle, overlapping one another to build the sides of the nest.

Fill in the centre with soft things like dead grass, feathers and fallen leaves.

Sit in it to test if it's comfy. If you were a baby bird, would you feel safe here?



## Mini woodland

Design your own miniature woodland using natural items.

Find a blank canvas, either a grassy area or a patch of earthy woodland floor.

Look around you for anything you can use to represent trees. For example leaves, sticks, cones, feathers etc.

Plant the "trees" where you want them, then add any extras like paths, benches, pools, gates, fences, miniature sculptures and tiny dens using more natural materials. What else can you think of?

Draw a map of your mini wood. Hide something tiny in your wood and mark it on the map, then see if a friend can find the hidden treasure!



## Vole tunnels

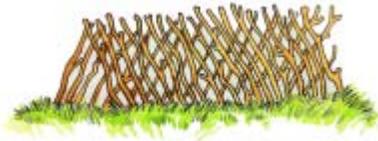
Voles are small mammals that look a little like mice, but come out to look for food in the day instead of the night.

They don't like being in open spaces because they're visible to hungry predators like birds and other mammals.

Create some runs for them in a sunny woodland glade or clearing, so they can scurry around safely.

To make a tunnel, place two rows of sticks into the ground so they cross over at the top making an upside down 'V' shape. Leave little doorways along the tunnel so they can hop out to find food in the surrounding area.

When you've finished your tunnels, choose a quiet spot to sit and watch. Do you see anything dash in and out - minibeasts, tiny birds or small mammals?



## Mole castles

Find a mole hill and decorate it! Use fallen flowers, leaves, seeds, cones and feathers to turn a mole hill into a grand castle.

Make a leafy moat round the outside and use sticks to make a drawbridge. Create height with more sticks and make flags from feathers or leaves. Build turrets and towers with a bucket and spade or empty jam jars.

Moles create tunnels underground and push the earth out of a hole at the centre of a hill, so don't poke soil back down the hole - they worked hard to get it out!

**Did you know...** Moles can dig up to 20m of tunnel a day.



## Special paths to super surprises

Ever found something really special in a forest that you would like to share with someone else? Help them find it by creating a special path.

Decide where you want your path to go to and from. Your super surprise could be anything - an animal burrow, a really interesting tree, a den you've built or a secret woodland glade.

Your path could lead from a main path or something else interesting.

Ways to create paths:

- Sweep dead leaves with your feet to uncover a bare earth path
- Line the edges of your path with small sticks poking up out of the ground
- Create a "leaf snake" to get people intrigued - pin leaves together with small sticks, or just create a trail on the ground
- Make a trail using tree seeds like acorns, conkers, field maple seeds, beech nuts, hazelnuts... (watch out for hungry animals that might steal part of your trail to eat!)
- There's no reason your path has to be a straight line - turn it into a wiggly walk around trees, over logs and across tree stumps!



## Dormouse bridges

Dormice are an endangered species that rely on trees to survive.

Have fun building bridges that dormice can use to quickly get from one branch to another.

Balance sticks in the trees to create "bridges" between branches, which dormice can clamber along.

Dormice are nocturnal - this means they are active at night, so you probably won't see them during the day. So look out for other animals and creepy crawlies using the bridges instead.



## Stick ships

Aaarrgh, me hearties! Build a ship in the woods using sticks and branches, then set sail with your imagination. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Use sticks to outline the shape of a boat on the ground.
- Build your ship around a sturdy tree then climb up the "rigging" into the "crow's nest" and keep a look out for land.
- Use long branches as oars to "row" your boat.
- Create a cabin area with logs for seating and find a fallen branch with leaves to "swab the decks" of your ship.
- Sit on the edge of your boat and try to catch some fish. Scatter leaves in the "sea" and pretend they're fish, then use sticks to catch them.
- Use a fallen branch to make naughty pirates "walk the plank"!



## Creepy crawly palaces

Minibeasts need safe places to live, hibernate and lay their eggs. Help them by building them a home. Choose an area that won't be disturbed by people and is sheltered from the wind and rain, then build away:

- Piles of logs are very good for millipedes, woodlice, stag beetle larvae and other grubs which feed on dead wood.
- Stuff the holes between the stacked logs with dead leaves and dead grass. This provides a useful place for creatures to lay their eggs.
- Create a large twig tower by pushing at least five long sticks into the ground in a circle. Fill the tower with small twigs lying on their sides. The long sticks will stop the pile falling over. Ladybirds and lace wings will find their way into the gaps to hibernate over the winter.



## Build a den – get started

Building dens in the woods is fantastic fun! You don't need any special equipment, just fallen branches and twigs to use as building materials.

To get started, find a sturdy, living, Y-shaped tree and prop the longest branch you can find against the 'Y'. This will be your den's frame.

Lean other branches and sticks against the long branch until you have a wall that shelters you from cold winds. You could put sticks on both sides of the branch to build two walls, but remember to leave a doorway so you can get in and out! Fill in the gaps between the branches with fallen leaves to make your den really cosy and wind-proof.

This is a really simple way to build a den. Once you've mastered this technique, try experimenting to see what other types of den you can build.



## Obstacle course

### Climbing frame

Find logs or very low branches to climb over or balance along.

How far can you go without touching the woodland floor?

### Muddy mayhem

Find the biggest, muddiest puddle to squelch through!

### Leaf lake

Make a giant leaf pile to wade through (or jump into!)



### Pine cone shot put

Make a circle on the ground out of sticks and stand well back, then take turns throwing three pine cones into it.

Who can get closest to the middle of the circle?

## Obstacle course

Build an obstacle course with your friends in the woods using trees, sticks and logs.

### Monkey bar branches

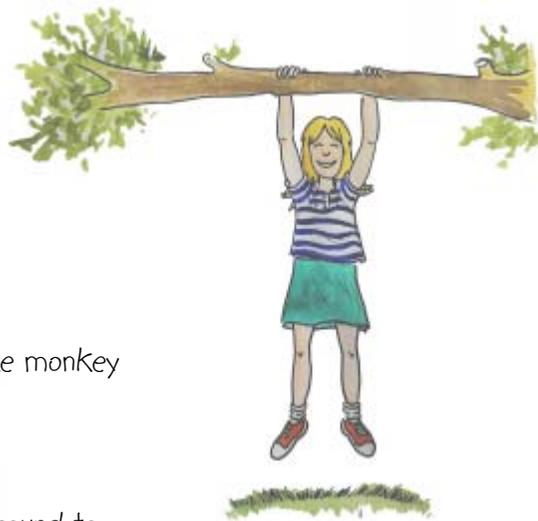
Find a tree with strong branches like monkey bars to swing from.

### Stick slalom

Poke a long line of sticks into the ground to weave in and out of.

### Hardwood hurdles

Balance a thin stick across two logs to create a hurdle to jump over, or to crawl or limbo underneath.



## Build a den - make it special

Decorate your den to make it extra special!

- Sweep out the inside of your den and find small logs for seats.
- Decorate your den with fallen flowers or leaves.
- Write a message with sticks in front of your den. It could say 'welcome' or 'KEEP OUT!'
- Make a den garden. Build a fence of twigs stuck into the ground to mark out the area, 'plant' pine cones in neat rows and make beds of different coloured fallen leaves.



## Build a den – mini dens!

A fun way to practice den-making is to build mini dens using small sticks propped up against a tree trunk or fallen branch.

Create a tiny shelter for a teddy, doll or finger puppet.

This is a great activity for little brothers and sisters who aren't big enough to help build a bigger den too.



## Build a den – watch out and take care

Use your common sense when building dens:

- Be careful when moving branches and look out for other people. Walk forward and drag larger branches rather than carrying them. This helps to avoid tripping people up or bashing them!
- Be especially careful with large, heavy branches. Make sure they're secure leaning against a tree or each other, so they don't slip off and bump people.
- Only use fallen branches to create dens. Trees are living things and hold onto what they still need it.
- Don't use bracken. It can be home to ticks which could make you poorly.

