

Early
Years



SPRING INTO SPRING

Practical, fun
and engaging
activity ideas

Introduction

Welcome to this collection of ideas to help support you with home learning activities. There are lots of suggestions, as well as useful facts. You may wish to dip into this selection, modifying and adapting them to your child's interests and to your context. There is an overarching theme of spring but this is a catalyst and your activities could lead into all kinds of new directions.

These learning opportunities are about shared experiences and about having fun. Nature activities may be limited to your garden, window box or a book but so many new skills and insights can be acquired. Be creative and utilise what you have around your home. Always risk assess carefully and ensure children are supervised. Have fun with descriptions and incorporate a lexicon of language, a wonder of words and a fountain of fabulous facts.

Nature is really incredible and even if we cannot be really close to it, we can marvel at its magnificence.

It is a real joy to see butterflies emerge in the spring. They float and flutter from plant to plant. In the UK alone there are approximately 60 species and thousands around the world.

Fun Facts

- **Butterflies taste with their feet.**
- **They have six legs.**
- **They do not have teeth, but they do have a long, coiled tongue.**
- **Some butterflies can camouflage themselves into their background.**
- **Butterflies eggs can be different shapes.**



Activity Ideas

1. **A butterfly has four life stages.** 1. An egg (ovum). 2. Larva (caterpillar). 3. Pupa (chrysalis). 4. Butterfly (imago). Draw and label this life cycle.
2. **Keep a butterfly record of the ones you have observed.** You could draw them or even photograph them. If this is not possible, look in books or online. You may see a Peacock, Red Admiral or a Small Tortoise butterfly.
3. **Encourage butterflies to your garden or window box.** They enjoy nectar rich flowers and feed in sunny areas. Try Lavender, Buddleia, Verbena, Hebe or Valerian. If you have space, plant a mini wild flower meadow.
4. **Design your own dramatic butterfly.** Use varied colours, materials and textures. Give it an exciting name. Will it be huge, gigantic, immense or teeny tiny? Will it hover, float, soar or zoom rather than just flying?
5. **Butterflies are bilaterally symmetrical (a mirror image of both sides).** You could fold a piece of paper in half, open it, add paint to one side only, fold it again and press the paint. Open it up to see both sides the same. You can then cut out a butterfly shape when it is dry.
6. **Draw around your hands to make an outline on a piece of paper.** Cut them out to form the wings of a butterfly. You could use a spoon, a peg or a lolly stick for the centre. Decorate with sequins, buttons, paper, shapes, etc.
7. **Make your own butterfly wings to float and dance around in.** Find a piece of fabric. It could be an old curtain, a shawl, a tea towel, etc. Scrunch the middle together and hold it in place using a hair bobble, ribbon or string. Sew little loops on the edges of both sides. Put the fabric on your back, put the loops around your fingers and you are ready to flutter and fly.
8. **Read the story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' by Eric Carle.**

Most frogs hibernate during the winter months so we don't see many around. When the weather gets warmer during spring, they come out of hibernation and you might see lots of frogs returning to their ponds.

Fun Facts

- There are more than 5000 species of frog.
- Some frogs can jump over 20 times their own body length.
- Frogs don't drink water, they absorb it through their skin.
- A group of frogs is called an army.



Activity Ideas

1. **'Five Little Speckled Frogs' is a great rhyme to sing together.** Sing the rhyme out loud and act it out using any props you have available. The log might be a chair, a cushion or a piece of wood outside. You might make the frogs by drawing and cutting them out, or they could be rolled up socks or a selection of cuddly toys.
2. **There are many great books to read about frogs.** A few wonderful examples are: 'Oi Frog' by Kes Gray, 'The Frog Prince' by Brothers Grimm, and 'The Story of the Dancing Frog' by Quentin Blake. Why not try making up your own frog stories to share aloud?
3. **The life cycle of a frog** is fascinating because they undergo a complete metamorphosis from eggs (frogspawn) to tadpoles to frogs. Research and draw the lifecycle of a frog and label it.
4. **Frogs are well known for jumping using their strong back legs.** Practise your best frog jumps and see how far you can jump. Work out a way to measure or record the distance of your frog jumps. You could put a marker and see if you can increase the distance by practising daily.
5. **Describe how tadpoles move.** They are quick, rapid, speedy, fast; they wriggle and dart about. Try to imitate a tadpole!
6. **Make a frog.** Let your imagination run wild and see if you can create a model or picture of a frog. You could use paper, card, a paper plate or even print your handprint and turn it into a frog. Concertina strips of green paper to make springy frogs' legs.
7. **Lily pads can provide frogs with a hiding place and somewhere to sit.** Make some large lily pads from fabric, paper or you could draw them in chalks outside. Lay them on the floor and you (the frog) can hop from pad to pad. You could make the lily pads different colours and you have to say out loud the colour you hop onto. You could also write numbers or letters on them and again, say out loud what you land on. Can you find the letter that your name begins with? (please be careful what surface you do this on, as your lily pads might slip. Make sure an adult checks this first)

Minibeasts are a large group of creatures that are invertebrates (they have no backbone). It includes spiders, butterflies, worms, ants, bees, etc. Each creature has its own fascinating facts. Here are just a few to start you off learning about them. Each country will have its own special minibeasts.

Fun Facts

- Each creature has its own preferred habitat, such as in a tree trunk, under a stone, in the grass or in the soil.
- They are the largest group of creatures on Earth.
- Some minibeasts are helpful by feeding on poo in fields.
- Insects have 6 legs. Arachnids, such as spiders, ticks and scorpions have 8 legs.



Activity Ideas

1. **Go on a minibeast search in your garden.** Look closely, what can you see? You will need to be quiet, move slowly and not disturb them. Each season you can see different creatures. Keep a record of what you discover. If you cannot go into the garden, search in books and online for information. The Wildlife and Woodland Trusts have amazing facts and ideas. Become an entomologist (a scientist who studies insects).
2. **Ladybirds are beetles and are very helpful.** One ladybird can eat 5000 aphids (which damage plants) in its life. They are mini pest controllers. Try making your own ladybirds, perhaps with a coloured/painted paper plate or left over cardboard. Cut out black spots and make the pattern symmetrical on both sides.
3. **Bees are really important to our world as they pollinate the food we grow, e.g. tomatoes, apples, and broccoli.** They also make honey! You can help the bees and other creatures by making a bug house. Give it an impressive name, for example 'The Grand Bug Palace'. They vary in scale and design. You will need to provide lots of little habitats using materials such as roof tiles, bricks, straw, bamboo, etc. There are lots of helpful videos online. If you cannot build one, why not draw your grand hotel instead.
4. **Make your own little minibeast garden in a tray, a window box or a planter.** Plant some flowers and herbs to attract the creatures, e.g. lavender, mint or rosemary. Place a shallow pot with stones in it for the bees to be able to drink (they need something to stand on). Decorate pebbles, make a little bridge and make it as magical as you wish.
5. **Worms do not have eyes and they use the hairs on their smooth skin to move.** They are really good for the garden as they eat leaves and roots in the soil to make it better for plants to grow. Can you make a collection of varying length worms, in dough, paper, card, etc.? Can you order them in size? Use lots of mathematical language, such as longer, shorter, narrow, medium, and smallest.

Spring is a busy time of year for birds. They will be building their nests ready to lay their eggs in. There are approximately 10,000 species of birds in the world and they are fascinating creatures to learn about. You might be able to view some of them through your window or learn about them from photographs, stories and online.

Fun Facts

- **Birds are vertebrates (animals with a backbone).**
- **They have feathers, lay eggs and have wings, but not all birds fly, such as ostriches, emus and penguins.**
- **The ostrich is the largest bird with the largest eyes (5x bigger than yours), and it lays the biggest eggs.**
- **Swallows sometimes travel 200 miles a day.**



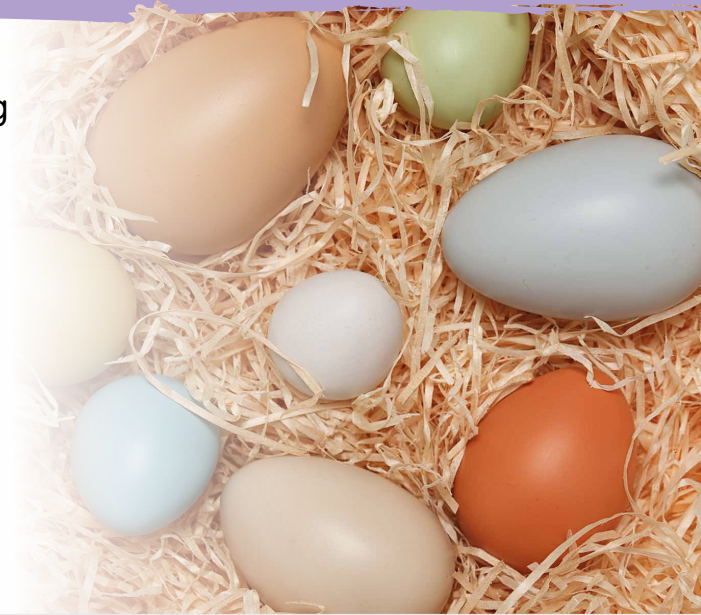
Activity Ideas

1. **Which birds can you see from your window and what are they doing?** Keep a daily record. You could make a clipboard from cardboard and a clothes peg. After a week of recording your observations, look at your information and answer these questions. Which bird was the most common? How many species did you see?
2. **You could make pretend binoculars** from two kitchen cardboard rolls or two rolled up card cylinders ... "I spy a blackbird, a sparrow and a starling".
3. **Find out about migrating birds** such as swallows and house martins. If you were a bird, where would you fly to?
4. **Birds have 2 feet and usually 4 toes.** They are used for walking, paddling, scratching, perching, etc. An ostrich can stride 5m. How far can you stride, hop, jump and leap? What other actions can you use your feet for, e.g. dancing, tapping, jogging, etc.?
5. **Can you create an amazing, colourful imaginary bird?** Draw it, paint it, or collage it. Describe what it looks like, what it can do and where it will travel to. Think of a fabulous name for it too.
6. **You could perhaps make a bird box.**
7. **Share books, stories, poems and rhymes about birds**, for example Owl Babies by M. Waddell, Birds to Spot by Sam Smith, Two Little Dickie Birds and Five Little Ducks.
8. **Can you make your own wings**, perhaps from a piece of fabric pegged to the back of your t-shirt? Pretend to hover, fly, soar, sweep, peck and flutter.
9. **The RSPB website is a brilliant place** for more fascinating ideas and information.

Often we just think of chickens laying eggs but all kinds of creatures also lay them. They are called oviparous. Fish, frogs, snails, spiders, butterflies, alligators and turtles are just a few of the egg laying species. Eggs can be quite fascinating.

Fun Facts

- In the Antarctic (one of the coldest places on earth), the male penguin balances the egg on its feet, underneath its feathers to keep it warm.
- An octopus egg is transparent.
- The white of an egg is called albumen, the yolk is called vitellus and there is a shell to protect the liquid.
- A bird lays a clutch of eggs.



Activity Ideas

1. **Shops usually sell chicken eggs in boxes of a dozen (12) or a half dozen (6).** Eggs are a healthy, protein packed food for some people. (Allergy aware!) Can you think of how eggs can be cooked? They could be scrambled, boiled, fried, poached, in omelettes, etc. Perhaps you could look at recipes for ideas and do some baking together. (Risk assess!) Describe the baking stages, the mixture, textures, colours and how it changes.
2. **Creatures will lay eggs** in different places, in water, in sand, on a leaf (like the Very Hungry Caterpillar), etc. A lot of birds are busy collecting materials to build their nests in spring. Some of them build them on the ground, in nesting boxes, bushes or cliff faces. (Be careful not to disturb the birds) Try making your own nests from strips of old shredded paper, paper straws, twigs, etc. Pretend eggs could be made from salt dough, play dough or paper. Try making chocolate nests with cereals or cupcake nests with buttercream icing.
3. **Say rhymes together**, e.g. Humpty Dumpty, **or read books about eggs**, e.g. 'Chickens Aren't The Only Ones' by R. Heller or 'Guess What is Growing Inside This Egg' by M. Posada.
4. **Eggs are often given as a treat at Easter time.** Tsar Alexander 3rd gave his wife a Fabergé egg made of gold with jewels, a golden chicken and a necklace inside it. Can you design a 2d egg for a gift for someone? Decorate it with patterns, shapes, sequins, buttons, fabric scraps, magazine cuttings, old envelopes, etc.
5. **Cut out lots of paper or card eggs of the same size.** Decorate pairs in the same style. You could mix them up and play 'snap eggs'. If you cut the eggs in a zigzag pattern, you can match the top to the bottom. Hide the eggs around for an egg treasure trail and tell children if they are hot or cold, i.e. if they are near or far away.
6. **Make paper maché eggs** by covering a balloon with paste and wallpaper strips. You can make paste with two cups of water to one cup of flour. When it is dry, you can paint it. Make up engaging stories about magical dragon eggs, alien eggs, golden eggs, etc.

Sheep usually have their lambs in the late winter months and in early spring in the UK. The fields and hillsides have an abundance of tasty green grass for them to eat and this helps the ewes provide milk for their young. There are millions of sheep in the world and here are some interesting things to learn about them.

Fun Facts

- A male sheep is called a ram, a female is a ewe and a baby is called a lamb.
- Sheep usually have one or two lambs (twins) and occasionally triplets and very rarely quadruplets.
- Lambs can stand up and walk quite quickly after being born.
- People sometimes count pretend sheep in order to drift off to sleep.



Activity Ideas

1. **Learn about the lovely, beautiful lambs that are such a delightful sign of spring.** Read or go online to find out more information. Lambs love to race around, skipping, jumping and generally being energetic. They are often described as gambolling. This means to run and jump in a happy way. Perhaps you could jump, hop, skip, etc. Listen to a favourite cheerful song and dance around to make you feel energised and in a happy mood.
2. **Say traditional rhymes that have sheep in them,** such as Little Bo Beep, Baa Baa Black Sheep and Mary Had a Little Lamb.
3. **Sheep have a thick fleece covering their bodies.** This is usually shorn as it can become very heavy, dirty, hot and can make the sheep unwell. Think about which clothes you wear for different occasions and temperatures. What would you wear if you were in the snow or at a beach?
4. **The sheep's fleece can be turned into woollen yarn and then made into textiles.** In the past, people would spin the yarn on a spinning wheel. What can you find that is made of wool, such as scarves, gloves, and jumpers?
5. **Sheep are herbivores, only eating a plant based diet.** Find out which other creatures are plant eaters, such as horses, zebras, camels, etc. (A Diplodocus dinosaur was a herbivore!)
6. **Draw around your hands and cut out lots of paper glove outlines.** Design your own matching pair of woolly gloves. Use all kinds of patterns, shapes, swirls, etc.
7. **You could try finger kitting to make simple chains.** This is great for fine motor skills and very calming!
8. **Make some sheep.** You could make pom-pom sheep, by winding wool around card circles then adding faces and ears. You could make your own flock. Make fluffy sheep out of cotton wool. You could cut out a sheep-like shape and curl strips of white paper around a pencil to make a fleecy coat. Attach lots of these curls and then add a face, legs, etc.

Rainbows are such a beautiful sight to see in the sky. Seeing a rainbow can often brighten up your day. We often see rainbows in spring because we have lots of sun and rain at the same time.

Fun Facts

- Rainbows are made when light shines through water, like when the sun shines through the rain.
- There are lots of shades of colours in a rainbow, but the colours we can see are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.
- Rainbows are made up of light, so you can't ever actually touch them.
- Sometimes you can see a double rainbow.



Activity Ideas

1. **Sing a rainbow song.** Have a look online for a song all about rainbows, for example 'I can sing a rainbow' or 'Over the Rainbow'. Sing along, dance along or simply listen and enjoy the song to help brighten up your spring day.
2. **Go on a rainbow scavenger hunt around your house or outside.** Try to find an item for every colour of the rainbow. Are there any colours you can't find?
3. **One of the most shared rainbow myths is that there is a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow.** Imagine you see a rainbow in the sky. Draw a picture of what you would like to find at the end of the rainbow and tell someone why. Talk about this with your family and find out what other people would like to find.
4. **What happens when we mix the colours of the rainbow?** Use paints and explore what happens when you mix different colours together. If you don't have paint, try using bottles of water with a few drops of different food colouring in each. Let children explore by mixing the different coloured waters together. You can also make coloured ice cubes using water and food colouring. Once they are frozen, put different combinations in water, watch them melt and see what happens.
5. **Can you make a rainbow?** Become an artist and create your very own rainbow. You could make it as big or as small as you like and think about different artistic techniques to use. You could use handprints, finger painting, dots using a cotton bud, collage materials, potato stamping, chalks outside ... the options are endless!
6. **Sometimes we can see rainbow colours when we blow bubbles.** Have a go at blowing some bubbles outside and see if you can see a rainbow.
7. **Try some rainbow cooking.** With an adult helping, make rainbow buns, biscuits or cakes by adding a few drops of food colouring into your mixture. Or you could use rainbow sprinkles to decorate. You could also try and create rainbow snacks using fruit and vegetables of different colours.

After the cold winter months, spring is a really welcome sight and you may start to notice plants with new leaves and buds. Flowers start to emerge and bloom. Some blossoms appear. This makes a cheerful and often colourful picture. Perhaps they will inspire you.

Fun Facts

- There are over 3000 varieties of tulips and in Holland, in the 1600s, some bulbs cost more than a house.
- There are over 13,000 types of daffodil. They have a centre called a trumpet and are the national flower for Wales.
- A dandelion opens its petals in the morning and closes them in the evening. Sometimes people blow the puffballs' tiny seeds to make a wish.



Activity Ideas

1. **You may have a garden where you can observe how the plants are transforming**, if not, look at books or online. Learn their names and what they look like. You may also want to learn about wild flowers such as celandines, bluebells, violets, daisies, etc. They are beautiful but also provide nectar for insects. It is important we protect these cheerful and helpful flowers.
2. **Can you paint, draw or collage a flower?** Try to match the colours carefully. Describe the shades. Rather than just saying yellow, extend the language with references to lemon, canary yellow, golden, etc. What do you add to the paint to adapt the colours?
3. **Label the parts of the flower.** It could be as simple as stem, leaf and petals.
4. **Describe the flowers' scent and texture if you have some that you can observe closely.** Use words such as smooth, soft, velvety, etc.
5. **Look closely at different leaves.** This may be real ones, or patterns around your home, e.g. on cushions and curtains, in magazines, books, etc. They really do vary in size, shape and colour.
6. **Most plants need light, water and minerals from the soil to grow.** Some plants can survive very harsh conditions and some can grow in water. Try planting some seeds or bulbs, e.g. a sunflower seed. When you cut the tops off the carrots, place them in a tray of shallow water and wait for them to sprout. Make mini gardens in pots, containers and window boxes.
7. **Be creative and inventive making your own spring flowers.** Use cereal packets, bottle tops, packaging, foil, sticks, paper straws, paper plates, cupcakes cases, etc. You may have wrapping paper or old wallpaper to use too. Cut out petals and perhaps use a button for the centre of the flower. You could even try origami flowers (it means folding paper).
8. **Make a giant flower from lots of painted pebbles, shells or buttons.** Lay them out carefully to make the shape.

You may start to notice that the trees in springtime are beginning to sprout their leaves and some may even have blossom. What you may not notice, is that there is so much more going on. Birds may be building their nests, insects may be scurrying around and lots more may be happening. Learn about trees around the world and how fascinating they are.

Fun Facts

- In California, there is a tree that is approximately 5000 years old.
- There are approximately 3 trillion trees on Earth.
- The Major Oak is a tree in Sherwood Forest and legend has it that Robin Hood and his merry men sheltered there.
- Astronauts took seeds to the moon in 1971. They later planted them on Earth and called them Moon Trees.



Activity Ideas

1. **Look closely at the trees.** Can you see how they are not all the same? You may be able to observe them in your garden or in books and online. Record the different trees and their names. Draw the shapes of their leaves. Try to recreate the colour shades.
2. **Draw a diagram of a tree and label the different parts.** You could label the roots, trunk, bark, branches and leaves.
3. **Trees are really important to our world.** They help with the air quality and to stop soil erosion. They provide a home for lots of creatures. Some trees even give us food. Can you think of examples and then draw the fruit, e.g. apples, plums, etc.?
4. **You may see birds building their nests in trees or hear them as they make their beautiful calls.** If you notice some large, scruffy nests, it might be a squirrel's nest called a drey. They build it close to the tree trunk or in the forks of the branches. A baby squirrel is called a kit or kitten. Find out what other baby animals are called.
5. **A large oak tree can drink 100 gallons of water a day.** It can also produce thousands of acorns. There is a proverb, 'Great oaks from little acorns grow'. It means that something that starts off small can grow into something huge. Reflect upon the things you do and how they could grow into something. Think about what you may need to persist and persevere with.
6. **Research how different artists painted or created trees.** Van Gogh painted Cypress and Olive trees. Gustav Klimt painted a Tree of Life with curls and swirls. Dr. Seuss created magical trees in the story of The Lorax (this was also a lesson about caring for our environment). Can you create your own special tree using these as your inspiration?
7. **Can you find a stick in your garden (or use a pretend one)?** What uses can you find for it? Will it be a wand, a measuring stick, a stirrer or perhaps you can decorate it. Read 'The Stickman' by Julia Donaldson.

Put A Spring In Your Step



For a lot of people spring is their favourite time of year with so many things to see and experience. Spring marks the start of warmer weather, the blooming of flowers, the budding of leaves, and new animals being born. Spring often inspires people with their creativity and their motivation. What do you like about spring?

Fun Facts

- **Your sense of smell can be stronger in the spring because there is more moisture in the air.**
- **The days get longer and warmer in spring.**
- **In spring, baby birds learn to sing by hearing other birds sing.**



Activity Ideas

1. **Spring is a time of year that makes a lot of people happy with so many signs of new life.** What other words can you think of that mean happy? Think of lots of exciting words to describe how spring makes you feel, for example joyful, bright, or cheerful.
2. **Reading can put a spring in your step.** Some books make us happy, some books make us laugh and some books help to teach us things. Look at the books you have at home and choose your favourite. Why do you like it? Read the book aloud and talk to someone about why this is your favourite book.
3. **In spring we often see lots of clouds in the sky.** Take a look out of the window and see what clouds you can see. Some people say that clouds look like different animals, people or objects. Can you see any clouds that look like something else?
4. **Exercise and movement can help to put a spring in your step.** Set up a daily activity time when you can get moving. You could set up an obstacle course, create a spring dance or try out some yoga. How does exercise make you feel?
5. **Scientists have told us that laughter helps to make us feel happier.** Try out lots of different ways to make you and your family laugh. You could learn some new jokes or tell some of your favourites. You could read a funny story or retell stories of things that made you laugh. Apparently, you can't make yourself laugh by tickling yourself. Why not give it a try?
6. **Spending time with friends and family can make us feel happy.** Plan something fun to do with your family at home. You could have a film night, play a game or write a letter to your friends.
7. **Some people find that being creative makes them happy.** There are so many ways you can be creative including dancing, drawing, painting, modelling, etc. Pick something you would like to do and have a go at being creative. You could draw a picture to put up at home, or give to someone else to brighten their day. Why not draw a picture or make something to put in your window to cheer up those who walk past.