

Squirrels & Beavers



Den Building



45 Minute session



12 participants + Adults



Supervision ratio as per P.O.R



No qualification required

What is this activity?

Den Building is a way to simply introduce camping and shelter building to younger children. It uses simple equipment designed for children and can be run without any specialist qualifications or knowledge by adult volunteers.

What equipment do we use?

Den Building Kit

This pack contains equipment which can be split up to make several small dens, or you can combine it to make one large den.



Shelter Sheets



Tent Pegs and string



Bungee Toggles



Stick-Lets

How to set up the activity

You'll need to find a suitable place to run your session. Ideally you are looking for:



Trees

An area with lots of trees but not much "Understory" (i.e. lots of space under the trees which isn't filled with bushes).



Up above and down below

Walk around and check for hazards above you (e.g. dead branches which might fall), and look for hazards on the ground – these could be natural (e.g. Stinging nettles, Ants nests), or manmade (e.g. rubbish).



Find some sticks!

Gather 4 or 5 long sticks you can use to demonstrate a den.



Indoor Alternative

Den building also works indoors! Just find a room with lots of chairs and tables to substitute for trees!

How to run the session

Briefing

Give the group some simple rules to follow (5 minutes)



You must always be able to see the leader



Look carefully before picking up sticks or stones



Be careful of other people when moving sticks



If you hear "stop" you must freeze where you are!

What is a den? Demonstrate a few simple ideas for Dens (5 minutes)



Explain that a den is a shelter we build to keep us safe, warm and dry. It like a tent that we make ourselves. We can build them with all natural materials, or we can use other stuff to help.



Using the sticks you gathered earlier and some of the equipment quickly demonstrate the basics of a den. There are some examples on the next page - it's just to give them an idea, it doesn't need to be perfect!



Demonstrate a few different ways on connecting things e.g. the Bungees, string, pegs, gravity, and stick-lets.

Prepare to build Get your materials together and find a location (10 minutes)



Split the group into small teams and send them with an adult to choose somewhere to both build a den AND to pick some long sticks to use.



Remind them of the simple rules you set at the start, and if you identified any hazards then make sure you set clear boundaries to be avoided.

Build a den Have a go at building shelters! (20minutes)



Give each group a selection of the shelter building equipment to use and get them to explore what materials they have – you might have to show them how some of the items can be used.



Ask them to build an amazing den – and if they need any help then to ask their adult (e.g. tying knots)



Shake it!

Before anyone climbs inside a den the adult with the group should give it a shake to make sure sticks don't fall down on people inside.



If they complete their shelter with time to spare, then challenge them to use their imagination to make it more comfortable (e.g. build a bed)

Leave no trace Pack everything away! (5 minutes)



When we work in the woods we should try to leave them as if we were never there! Take down you shelters and spread any natural materials back out around the area so no one can tell you built your den!

Simple Shelters

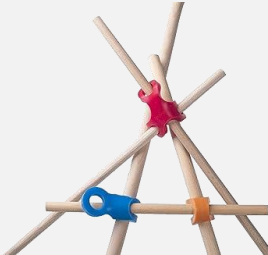
Connecting things together

Bungee Toggles



Connect the tarpaulin to sticks or guy lines. Or wrap them around 2 sticks to connect them together.

Stick-Lets



Rubber connectors in various shapes and sizes which quickly attach sticks together in all sorts of shapes

Simple Square Lashing

If you want to teach some more advanced skills, then try starting with this technique.



Start by making a loop in the middle of the string.



Cross over your sticks and put the loop around the stick at the back



Working with both ends of the string together wrap over the top stick



Cross the two ends over behind the back stick and back up again.



Continue wrapping the string over and around both sticks 3 or 4 times.



Cross the strings in the middle of the two sticks and wrap sideways.



Use a couple of wraps and pull tight – this tightens up the lashing



To finish tie the two ends together with a simple reef knot or a bow.

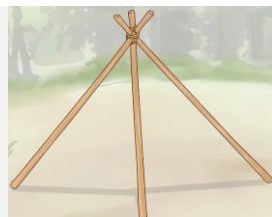
Den Shapes

You can just let the group use their imagination – but if they need a bit of help knowing what a den could look like then these are some examples of den frames – you can use the shelter sheets (or sticks and leaves) to complete the shelter.



The "A" Frame

2 sticks form a door with a long "ridge" on top.



The TiPi

3 Medium sticks form a strong tripod shape.



The Lean To

A single sided den with sticks or a shelter sheet.