



2023 - 2024
Revised Edition



Junior Forester Award Leader Handbook

Aims

The Junior Forester Award aims to give children and young people of all ages an insight into the skills needed for a career in Forestry as well as equipping them with the practical ability to assist in woodland management in their schools and local communities.

What does it include?

- A programme of at least six sessions in which participants complete practical tasks and enhance their knowledge of woodlands and forestry.
- A course booklet for participants to record and reflect upon their achievements.

What facilities do we need?

- Access to some trees, preferably at least six different species. These do not need to be planted as a woodland, they can be around the school grounds, in a hedgerow or nearby in the local community.

Do our staff need to undertake specific training to deliver this award?

- The award has been designed to make outdoor learning accessible for all schools without the need for specific qualifications although it would be beneficial to have either the Outdoor Learning Practitioner or Forest School accreditation.
- If a school chooses to complete the tool use activities then the staff leading the group must be qualified to Forest School Leader Level 3 or other equivalent qualification which has assessed their safety with tools.

What resources will we need?

- A Junior Forester Award booklet for each participant.
- The participants will need to wear clothing that they can get muddy, ideally a full change of clothes from their school uniform, sturdy footwear and have waterproofs / sun protection depending on the weather.
- Optional resources are mentioned along with each session plan but these can be adapted to suit what you have available, the age of your group and their interest in the activities.
- Optional certificates and badges can be purchased from the RFS shop to present on successful completion.



How do I use this handbook?

The activities suggested in this handbook are just a guide and should be adapted to suit your setting, the age of your children, the time that you have available and your skills and experience.

All of the activities will need to be preceded by safety information relevant to your setting such as an explanation as to where the boundaries are, how you will call the children back if you need them, what they should do if they need you and any risk assessment information relevant to your site.

Remind the group at the start of the session that they should not pick up anything which:

- Is alive e.g. minibeast, other animal unless an adult is with them.
- Is growing e.g. still attached to the ground or a plant
- Is dead e.g. a dead mouse. Fascinating but best supervised by an adult wearing gloves
- Is animal waste
- They are not sure of or could cut themselves on.

If in any doubt about something they have found in the woodland they should always leave it well alone and call an adult to look at it rather than bringing it to the adult. This is of particular relevance in busy or urban areas with adjacent pedestrian access where hazardous litter can have been thrown or pushed through a fence.





Session 1: Managing Risk

Resources: Site risk assessment, risk flags or triangle warning signs, possibly gloves and gardening tools.

Connecting

Questions for discussion

What risks do they think there are in the forest? How should they stay safe? Why does a forester need to ensure his forest is safe?

It's really important in this first session to establish their existing level of knowledge about the woodland area and to challenge any misconceptions. Our experience of working with many children from urban areas tells us that they often think that there are bears and wolves in the forest that might harm them. We want them to stay safe in the forest but also to relax and enjoy being there without worrying about things that will not happen.

Challenging

Can they use cones or warning signs to identify hazards in their forest? What is the risk that they have identified and what control measures are they going to put in place?

Can they balance out the benefits of an activity against the risk? What about probability?

This section is all about balance and consideration, its technically possible that an alien space ship could crash on the forest while they are in it but is it likely? You could try and remove every trip hazard from a forest but is that good for the animals who live there? How do you balance their needs?

Consolidating

What practical measures do they need to undertake to make their woodland safe for visitors? This might include:

- Clearing paths and then edging them with branches or logs to show people where is safe to walk.
- Laying bark chippings to reduce slipping.
- Litter picking
- Making signs to ask people to take their litter home with them or to keep dogs on leads while children are playing.
- Pulling up nettles or cutting back brambles (if qualified to do so).



Session 2: Tree & Plant ID

Resources: OPAL Tree ID guide or similar, sheets or tarpaulins (at least one between 6), means of writing labels

Connecting

Questions for discussion

Which tree names do they already know?

How can we tell the difference between each type of tree?

Why does a forester need to know the names of different trees in their forest?

Challenging

Depending on the size and variety of your wooded area, how many different types of tree can they identify?

Activity A

Collect as many different types of fallen leaves as they can find.

Bring them back, spread them out on their sheet or tarpaulin. Can they sort them into groups that are similar? What features help us to identify different leaves?

Can they use their ID guides to identify and write labels for their finds? You could do this with materials that you have brought out with you or natural materials from the forest floor.

Activity B

If there are not many loose finds to bring back, can they take an ID chart around the area and see which they can identify?

If they have the means to do so can they take photos of the different tree species they have identified and add their own labels?

Extension – could they use these to create a map or their own ID guide relevant to your woodland area?

Consolidating

If you call out the tree name can they run to the correct tree? Can they tell you something about that tree?



Session 3: Who lives in a wood like this?

Resources: Pictures or toys to represent the animals who may live in a wood. Magnifying glasses, ID guides.

Connecting

Questions for discussion

Either laminated cards or a set of soft toys can be hidden around the setting for the children to find.

Which of these really live here? Which should live somewhere else? Which only live in stories? Why have some animals that used to live in our forests vanished?

Why does a forester need to know what lives in their forest?

Challenging

Activity A - Hibernation

The story "A little bit of winter" by Paul Stewart is a lovely introduction to hibernation and habitats for EYFS and KS1. In autumn you can build hedgehog homes by making a tepee of sticks and then covering them with a thick layer of leaves for insulation.

Activity B – Making tracks

What signs of animal life can you find in your woodland area? At first sight, it might seem as if very little lives there, particularly on a busy school field but there will be hidden clues. Can you find animals droppings, fallen feathers, chewed seeds or nuts, animal footprints or pathways through the undergrowth? You might need to carefully lift some dead wood or stones to see what lives underneath.

Activity C - Wildlife stepping stones

Lay log slices or thick branches in quieter areas of your site as habitats for minibeasts.

Consolidating

I went to the forest and I saw....? Can they work together as a group to remember all of the animals that they might find living in a forest?



Session 4: Building from Wood

Resources: Depending on your site you may need to find some logs, sticks, leaves etc to bring in for the children to build from.

Connecting

Can the children find 5 items in your area that have been made from timber? Why was wood chosen as the best material for making these things? What might the disadvantage be of making these from plastic or metal?

Or: If your outdoor area doesn't have things made from wood, why not take in a discovery basket with 20 common household or school objects in. Which are made from wood? Why is wood a great sustainable resource?

Challenging

Activity A - Minibeast hotels

Deadwood is really important for providing homes for the hundreds of varieties of minibeast in our woodlands. Can they gather up suitable materials and build homes in areas that won't get disturbed?

Activity B – Dead Hedging

It is very easy for a regularly used forest site to have a completely bare ground layer as feet trample any new growth, trip hazards are removed and fallen branches used for den building and crafts. Can they identify any areas which they are going to “set aside” as wildlife areas and not go into? Collect up fallen branches and other dead material to make a “dead hedge” which marks this as a protected area as well as providing a habitat for wildlife itself.

Activity C - Rest a while

Human visitors to your forest might like somewhere to rest or play. What can they build out of wood for them to relax on or as a play area?

Consolidating

I went to the forest and I saw....? Can they work together as a group to remember all of the animals that they might find living in a forest?



Session 5: Woodland Management

Pathway A: Planting

Tree planting season is November to March. This ensures that the trees go into the ground in conditions that give them the best chance to get established and grow into mature trees.

Resources:

- Trees, these are often available free to schools through a variety of local and national schemes. Alternatively these can be grown from seed or from 50cm high “whips” that can be purchased relatively inexpensively from a variety of companies.
- Stakes and tree guards.
- Gloves
- Watering cans

Connecting

This topic is ideal for some research before the session. Can they find some statistics on deforestation and climate change? Why do we need sustainable forestry?

What do trees need to grow? Can they collect natural materials to create a diagram which shows all the things that trees need?

Challenging

You have probably decided where you want to plant the trees before the session but you may want to involve the children in this. The Woodland Trust website “Tree tools for Schools” is an excellent resource to help with your planning <http://treetoolsforschools.org.uk/menu/>

1. Depending on whether you are planting an individual tree, a hedgerow or a small area of woodland choose the correct stocking density and mark it out.
2. Use an appropriate hand tool to dig a hole for your tree.
3. Place the tree in the hole.
4. Push a stake into the ground next to your tree, close enough that it will fit inside your tree guard.
5. Put your tree guard over the tree and its stake and push well into the ground to prevent small mammals such as voles from getting underneath to eat the base of your tree.

Consolidating

How are they going to care for their trees in the future? Will they need watering? Who will be responsible for checking on them?



Pathway B: Tool Use

If a school chooses to complete the tool use activities then the staff leading the group must be qualified to Forest School Leader Level 3 or other equivalent qualification which has assessed their safety with tools. This handbook does not provide guidance on the safe use of tools.

Resources:

Appropriate tools

Protective equipment

Connecting

Your group are foresters wanting to improve their forest. Can they identify any trees that might need removing, pruning or coppicing?

Are they:

- Too close to another tree?
- Diseased or damaged?
- In an area where you want to create a clearing as a habitat for wildlife or for leisure uses?
- A tree that has self seeded in your forest and you do not wish to encourage?
- Ready for coppicing

Challenging

Use chalk to mark the trees that you have decided will need work on so that you can review your decisions before using any tools.

Decide as a group whether the planned tool use will be beneficial to your site.

Carry out the planned works.

Consolidating

How can they use the wood that has been cut?



Session 6: Forestry Ambassadors

Resources: None

Connecting

There is a great research opportunity here, what forests do your children have in their local area? How many different reasons can they find for why people like to visit a forest?

You may wish to bring along some objects and see if your group can explain a connection between it and leisure visits to a forest e.g. a cycling helmet, a pair of binoculars or some climbing rope.

Challenging

Activity A The Little Forest

What leisure facilities would they provide for the public if they were a forest manager? Can they create a miniature model of a forest park using materials found in your woodland?

Activity B Welcoming Visitors

Can they use the knowledge of their site that they have built up through the course of the programme to practice giving each other tours of the forest area and explaining its features?

Consolidating

Once they've practiced can they invite real visitors to the woodland area and show them what they have been doing?

Can they write their own woodland management plan to agree the ongoing tasks that may need doing in their forest once the Junior Foresters programme is completed?



Recognising Their Achievements

As your group progress through the Junior Forester Award they should record their learning in their log books. They may also wish to keep photos of activities they have undertaken or things they have made.

Junior Forester Award certificates are available to download when you register or can be ordered along with pin badges through the RFS shop. For data protection reasons we do not ask for children's names to be submitted to us, just order the number that you require and we will sign them and send them out to you on high quality card ready for you to fill out.



JUNIOR FOREST AWARD

SKILL	EVIDENCE	DATE & ADULT SIGNATURE
I CAN IDENTIFY RISKS IN A FOREST AND IMPROVE A SITE FOR OTHERS TO USE.		
I CAN IDENTIFY AT LEAST 6 TREES IN MY SITE.		
I CAN IDENTIFY AND IMPROVE MINIBEAST AND ANIMAL HABITATS IN MY SITE.		

PLANTING

SKILL	EVIDENCE	DATE & ADULT SIGNATURE
I CAN BUILD AN ITEM FROM WOOD TO ENHANCE MY SITE.		
I CAN PLANT A TREE/SHRUB/HEDGEROW.		
I CAN EXPLAIN THE FEATURES OF MY SITE TO A VISITOR.		

What have you enjoyed most doing Junior Foresters?

What have you learned?

Ever thought about forestry as a career?
More information at: [RFS Careers](#)

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JUNIOR FORESTER AWARD

NAME:.....

CLASS/GROUP:.....



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ROYAL FORESTRY SOCIETY



JUNIOR FOREST AWARD

SKILL	EVIDENCE	DATE & ADULT SIGNATURE
I CAN IDENTIFY RISKS IN A FOREST AND IMPROVE A SITE FOR OTHERS TO USE.		
I CAN IDENTIFY AT LEAST 6 TREES IN MY SITE.		
I CAN IDENTIFY AND IMPROVE MINIBEAST AND ANIMAL HABITATS IN MY SITE.		

TOOLS

SKILL	EVIDENCE	DATE & ADULT SIGNATURE
I CAN BUILD AN ITEM FROM WOOD TO ENHANCE MY SITE.		
I CAN SAFELY USE TOOLS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF MY SITE.		
I CAN EXPLAIN THE FEATURES OF MY SITE TO A VISITOR.		

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JUNIOR FORESTER AWARD

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