

# Out & about with ICT



Learning through Landscapes' **Ginny Wright** explains how the great outdoors offers countless opportunities to explore familiar technologies...

**W**hen we talk about ICT it's easy to think only of computers. Yet a child's world is full of ICT experiences, from televisions, mobile phones and digital cameras, to pedestrian crossings and supermarket checkouts. Children are naturally fascinated by pressing buttons and making things happen. But having the opportunity to explore ICT not only helps them to experience technology, but can also support other areas of learning. For example:

**Communication and language:**

With digital recorders, children can record and play back themselves and others talking or singing. You can link the recordings to photographs as inspiration for storytelling and story-making activities, or use them to make observations of developing language skills to share with parents.

**Knowledge and understanding of the world:**

Providing Internet access will enable children to explore the wider world in more detail. They may, for example, use it to identify wildlife outdoors, discover further information about events in the local community, or notice and record the changing weather conditions at your setting.



Photo: Homerton Children's Centre

Of course, there are plenty of ways in which you can introduce ICT outdoors. Here are just a few suggestions. Remember to consider how staff will monitor and assess these resources, build their use into planning, and look at which areas of learning they will help develop. Always introduce new equipment to the children first and allow them to have a go whilst showing them how to use it properly.

**Digital cameras**

Cameras can be used to find out more about your outdoors. Children could photograph the wildlife in your outdoor area or create a piece of artwork using natural materials. Then, with adult support, they can print and laminate the photographs for displays or picture books.

**Programmable/ remote-controlled toys**

These can be used to explore directional language and encourage problem-solving skills. Attach a trailer to transport materials around the outdoor area and let the children work together to plan the best route. Do they need to build a bridge over a puddle or muddy patch? How big a load can you put on the trailer and still move it?

**GPS equipment**

GPS devices can be used to help children find their route to your setting from home. Identify landmarks they will see, record the names of the streets and count the number of roads they have to cross.

**Torches/hand-held lanterns**

Torches are great for younger children as they are simple to use and help develop fine motor skills. Make them available for den-

**find out more**

Learning through Landscapes offers a range of services to support outdoor learning and play in the early years. Its membership resources and publications provide a regular supply of fresh activity ideas, and it offers on-site support through advisory visits and half-day, full-day or twilight training sessions for nurseries. Visit [ltl.org.uk](http://ltl.org.uk)

play and use them in the winter months to discover how your outdoor space looks at night.

**Mobile phones**

Phones have many functions that children will be able to use. Try the following:

- Let the children photograph their favourite places in your outdoor area.
- Help children send a text to their parents telling them about their day.
- Record the children singing and play it back to them using speakers.
- Plan a walk around the local area and get one of the children to call the setting when you are returning. You could use a map application to plot your walk too.

**On a budget?**

- Provide parents with a wish list of items – they may donate old cameras, phones or even laptops when they upgrade their current model.
- Search websites such as Gumtree or Freecycle for local people disposing of ICT items – you may have to collect them, but you will save money.
- Sign up to supermarket voucher schemes to purchase smaller items of equipment.

