



## Why an Outdoor Classroom Is Valuable for Daycares

### 1. Developmental Benefits

- Outdoor time supports *social and emotional development*: children collaborate more, resolve conflicts, and build empathy by playing together. [Childcare Ed+1](#)
- It improves *cognitive skills and focus*: nature-based learning helps attention and deeper learning. [woodkingdomwest.com](http://woodkingdomwest.com)
- Physical development is boosted through climbing, balancing, and exploring. [Green Garden Child Development Centers+1](#)

### 2. Learning Opportunities

- Natural materials (sticks, leaves, rocks) provide rich “loose parts” for creative and open-ended play. [ERIC](#)
- You can integrate curricula like science (gardening), math (measuring, counting), and art (nature art). [Outdoor Eden+1](#)
- Outdoor classrooms encourage risk-taking in a controlled way (e.g., balance beams, logs), which builds resilience. [Green Garden Child Development Centers](#)

### 3. Well-being

- Connection to nature can lower stress and boost mood.
- Being outside daily (when possible) builds a routine around exploration. Some centers aim for “rain, shine, or snow.” [Green Garden Child Development Centers](#)

# Key Considerations & Design Tips

When planning an outdoor classroom, especially for a daycare, it's essential to consider safety, logistics, and the learning flow.

- **Define Zones:** Create different zones for various activities, such as a gathering circle for read-alouds, a science/investigation area, a maker or art space, and quiet reflection spots. [Jumbula Blog](#)
- **Paths and Boundaries**  
Use natural materials (like logs, stepping stones, or wood planks) for pathways and to define areas so movement is guided and safe. [humanecology.ucdavis.edu](http://humanecology.ucdavis.edu)
- **Seating Variety**  
: Provide different seating options: benches, logs, stumps, boulders, hammocks — this supports different modes of play and rest. [humanecology.ucdavis.edu](http://humanecology.ucdavis.edu)
- **Shade & Weather Protection**  
: Use trees, fabric canopies, or trellises for shade. Also, plan for drainage so the area doesn't get overly muddy. [Jumbula Blog](#)
- **Storage**  
: Have storage for outdoor materials (tools, loose parts, art supplies) near the classroom entrance. [riccelff.org+1](http://riccelff.org+1)
- **Routines & Safety**
  - Set clear rules and visual/sound cues (like a chime) for transitions. [Jumbula Blog](#)
  - Teach and review safety protocols (first-aid, boundaries, footing). [Jumbula Blog](#)
  - Use a “grab-and-go” tote for materials (clipboards, magnifiers, pencils) to make setup fast. [Jumbula Blog](#)
- **Involve Kids**  
: Let children help plant gardens, pick materials, or design areas. This builds ownership and engagement. [humanecology.ucdavis.edu](http://humanecology.ucdavis.edu)
- **Risk vs Hygiene**  
There are some trade-offs: more movement and natural materials mean more risk, and exposure to dirt/hygiene challenges. [childcarerenovation.com](http://childcarerenovation.com)  
Mitigate by teaching risk awareness, good hygiene, and safe play.