

# Open-ended iPad Apps and the Outdoors

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## Guidelines for Educators

### Principles for using iPad apps outdoors (Ballentine, n.d.)

#### Select apps that...

1. **Tell stories** [video, photography, documentation opportunities]
2. **Put the real world first** [the app/activity enriches the experience rather than obscures/detracts from it]
3. **Require movement** [ensure that movement is part of the experience]



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## Getting Started

**Concerns about damage to the iPads and the possibility of sedentary behaviour led to the creation of outdoor use guidelines.**

- Please note, outdoor use that involves children documenting their play, activities and interests is not likely to inhibit activity levels, although every situation is different and should be evaluated accordingly.
- The open-ended and documentary nature of these types of apps creates situations where children are intended to remain engaged with the real world while using the technology both indoors and out.
- As children seem to use the iPad and app to document and record personal interests, this may provide an outlet for them to illustrate their experiences in meaningful ways.
- Initially, it may appear that some children are interested in the app simply for the sake of using the technological device, however, over time the usage may become more purposeful.
- Establishing clear guidelines for outdoor use, in consultation with the children, may be an effective way to promote appropriate and safe use that does not interfere with activity levels or being present in the moment.



- **‘Stars’ - an example of a child’s video documentation of their outdoor experience**

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## Environmental Changes

**Children may choose to document changes in the outdoor environment that could be related to a variety of elements.**

- As seasons change there are many transformations to be noted, from plant life to required clothing.
- Spring brings opportunities to document the greening of grass and growth of plants or the daily change in the size of the lingering snowbanks.
- Documenting how light or dark it is at the same time each day may help to illustrate the lengthening or shortening of days during winter and spring.
- New construction or changes in neighbouring buildings/environment may be of interest to children and help to construct stories of the neighbourhood that promote a sense of belonging.





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## New Discoveries

Taking the iPads on field trips or neighbourhood walks provides children with opportunities for them to document new environments and all of the exciting sounds and experiences they bring.



- Viewing these moments from a child's perspective may help to gain insight into what they value and find interesting.
- Using the iPads in this way may also provide children with the ability to reflect upon and share their experiences with others.



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## Outdoor Projects

**Taking the iPads outdoors provides opportunities for children to document any projects they are working on, such as gardening or learning about a specific insect or creature.**

- Insects that are found outside can be photographed for later identification or research or filmed to observe their habits.
- Plants can be photographed to demonstrate growth and change over a period of time.
- Audio clips recorded outdoors may provide an interesting means to distinguish and identify different sounds that are heard or provide sound effects to enhance a drawing or photograph.



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# Quick Tips!

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## Initial Considerations: Getting Ready...

- Ensure you have a **child-friendly case** that will provide adequate protection without hindering use of the iPad's functions, such as the camera.
- **Set guidelines** that are appropriate for your context and situation (eg. what types of weather are suitable for outdoor iPad use, what are the precautions for taking the iPads on climbing structures or near water/sand/soil)
- While sitting or remaining still for short periods may be necessary to take photos or draw a picture, encourage children to be mindful of overall **activity levels** during outdoor use
- Allow room for **flexibility**, if something really interesting/exciting is being documented there may be value in periodically extending the time frame





## Tips for Success

- Having the iPads regularly accessible during outdoor play may promote more intentional use over time; Establishing a routine for taking them out may be helpful
- Facilitate different forms of documentation with the iPads (photography, drawing, audio recordings, video) while children are playing outdoors, both in planned and spontaneous activities
- Try not to be too worried about the quality of the images, they will still hold meaning to the child(ren)
- Encourage children to take turns and document each other's activity
- Documenting field trips/neighbourhood walks can promote children's reflection after the event has occurred
- Have children share their work with other, either in person or electronically (work can be shared with children's families through the HiMama app, see Technical Guide for instructions)
- Images/recordings from outdoor use may be used indoors to extend learning eg. creating charts or expanding discussions as a group (How many different types of bugs did we take pictures of?; What type of siren does this audio recording sound like? etc)



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## Activity Suggestions for Children:

Observe, Document, and Reflect on...

- Weather changes
- Gardening
- Snow building
- Puddle jumping
- Animals
- Insects
- Birds
- Sounds

Insert your ideas here!





## Project Ideas for Children:

- Take a photo from the same spot, at the same time, over an extended period to observe changes in lighting, weather etc
- Interview a known community member eg. school crossing guard, parent who regularly passes by the playground
- Observe shadows at different times of the day
- Sketch or photograph plant-life, observe growth and changes over a period of time
- Document children's activities to illustrate changes in growth over time in their physical play experiences eg. jumping, running, digging, skipping, riding, climbing, throwing, catching, spinning etc.
- Document different types of transportation seen from the playground

Insert your ideas here!



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