About Outdoor Learning

Outdoor Learning is a broad term that includes discovery, experimentation, learning about and connecting to the natural world, and engaging in environmental and adventure activities.

Formal examples include woodland and coastal learning, multi-day expeditions, youth or community activity courses, school residential trips, sail training experiences, outdoor and adventure sports coaching.

Outdoor learning involves the transformation of knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviours through direct engagement with the outdoor environment for the personal and social benefit of individuals, families, society and the planet.

Purposeful experiences in the outdoors can be a catalyst for powerful and memorable learning.

Outdoor Learning is more than adventure sports or simply taking what could happen indoors outside. It can be found in a wide range of environments and situations, including personal adventures, outdoor recreation, informal education; non-formal settings, such as in clubs, Scouts and Guides; and formal settings such as those found in schools, colleges and universities.
Benefits of Outdoor Learning

Research shows that people benefit from outdoor learning in all areas of life. Outdoor Learning provides a highly effective way of addressing some of society’s key challenges:

- At a **global** level: fostering a connection that leads to respect and care for the natural world, an **appreciation of biodiversity and sustainability**, and pro-environmental behaviours.

- At the **societal** level: developing a sense of place leading to greater **engagement within a community** and an appreciation of the opportunities available to live, learn and work in the local area.

- At the **interpersonal** level: providing a safe and supportive setting to enhance social skills, **appreciate and value difference**. Encouraging loving and meaningful relationships across generations that foster tolerance, respect and kindness.

- At the **intrapersonal** level: engagement with the outdoors for health, wellbeing and nature connection, leading to **lifelong participation and outdoor competence**. Developing character, resilience, positive risk taking.

Across the outdoor sector and in wider use you can find Outdoor Learning described in many different ways. Each of these has the potential deliver many benefits when a planned and purposeful experience is facilitated by an outdoor learning professional. Some of the more common descriptions used are:

**Outdoor Education**
- Working with pupils and students from early years, primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities, etc. to meet their curriculum or subject needs and build skills for life.

**Outdoor Development**
- Supporting individual and community growth by working alongside local groups, clubs, associations, youth workers, DofE providers, scouts, guides, cadets, etc.

**Outdoor Training**
- Assisting teams and individuals to be more effective, agile and responsive with management and leadership training, apprentice development, graduate inductions, etc.

**Outdoor Sports**
- Developing greater skills, knowledge and experience in a particular outdoor sport or activity (climbing, canoeing, archery, sailing, orienteering, mountain biking, bushcraft, etc...)

**Outdoor Health and Wellbeing**
- Using the outdoors to support health, fitness and wellbeing through walking for health, outdoor counselling, wilderness therapy, adventure therapy, etc.

**Outdoor Adventure**
- Providing opportunities to explore, enjoy and connect with the natural world through exciting activities, adventures, expeditions, etc.
Outdoor Learning Providers

Outdoor Learning Professionals

Professionals in outdoor learning create, manage and run activity and outdoor learning programmes that deliver progressive learning and change in the outdoors. They apply outdoor leadership judgement in order to facilitate safe and effective individual and group learning using a wide variety of teaching, development, reflection, feedback and coaching strategies.

Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL) Professional Members are trained, experienced and uphold the values and behaviours that help others enjoy their environment, gain skills and make a positive difference for our world.

They sign up to a professional code of practice and an ongoing commitment to continuing professional development.
About the Institute

The Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL) champions safe activities and effective learning in the outdoors. We are a professional membership institute working towards an application for a Royal Charter.

Our members include paid and voluntary instructors, leaders, managers, teachers and researchers who design, facilitate and evaluate purposeful outdoor learning experiences.

- We support our members by providing professional recognition, a clear voice to policy makers, communities of practice, research hubs, occupational standards, guidance on practice, and sector quality assurance.

- Our mission is to increase participation in outdoor learning and to recognise and improve the quality of outdoor learning provision in the UK.

The Institute is a registered charity governed by a voluntary Board of Trustees elected by a membership network representing more than 5,000 skilled practitioners, educators and managers. We are driven by a vision of Outdoor Learning as a highly valued form of development, education and employment in UK society.

Join us at www.outdoor-learning.org