Explore and discover the forest

Aim of this section
To explore geographical features, and use and create maps

Preparation
- You will need to print and laminate the resources for the activities you are going to do.
- Contact your local Forestry Commission learning team to ask for advice about where to acquire aerial photos and map leaflets for your local forest. Visit forestry.gov.uk/learning and click on ‘contacts’.

Curriculum links

**EYFS**
- Mathematics
- Understanding the world

**Key stage 1: Geography**
- Human and physical geography
  - use basic geographical vocabulary to refer to key physical features.
- Geographical skills and fieldwork
  - use simple compass directions and locational and directional language, to describe the location of features and routes on a map;
  - use aerial photographs and plan perspectives to recognise landmarks and basic human and physical features; devise a simple map; and use and construct basic symbols in a key.
- Place Knowledge
  - understand geographical similarities and differences through studying the human and physical geography of a small area of the United Kingdom.

Resources provided with programme 1
- Geographical features checklist
- Gruffalo picture
- Sample aerial photo
- Sample Forestry Commission map

forestry.gov.uk/gruffaloteaching
Part 1
Introduction

The Forestry Commission looks after more than 1500 woods and forests in England – growing trees to provide timber to make things, and ensuring that plenty of habitats are provided for wildlife. Forests are also really important places for people to enjoy, and the Forestry Commission provides facilities and activities for visitors of all ages.

What sort of activities can people do in the forest?
Walking, running, playing, picnics, bike riding, horse riding, birdwatching.

What sort of things do you think the Forestry Commission could provide to help people to enjoy their visit to the forest?
Picnic tables, walking and cycling trails, play areas, cafes, Gruffalo trails and sculptures.

Look at an aerial photo of a forest:
Can the children identify any human settlements, physical features or landmarks?

Can they see areas that are planted with trees?
Are the trees all the same colour, or can they see any differences between the tree covered areas?

Why do they think there are differences?
There could be different species of trees, or different ages of plantation; some trees might be evergreen and some deciduous; some could be conifers and some broadleaves (see ‘Tree Words’ on page 7).

Can they see any open spaces or roads?

Part 2
Aerial photo of the forest
Part 3
Physical and human features of the forest

Look around – what can you see?
Which things are natural or physical features, and which are man-made or human features?

- Natural features might include hill, stream, valley, soil or rock.
- Human features might include house, fence, path, road, visitor centre, car park, play area or trail post.

Discuss how trees could be described as natural features, but that most have probably been planted or have grown from seeds from trees planted nearby, so they are in fact human features.

Locational and directional language

- Walk through the forest, looking for the physical and human features on the checklist.
- Give the children a Gruffalo picture and ask them to place it on, in or near various features. Next, encourage the children to use locational and directional language to describe where The Gruffalo is, e.g. The Gruffalo is on top of the picnic table, or to the left of the rocks; he is behind the fence which is around the car park, or he is balancing on the trail post, next to the path on top of the hill.

Extension
If you have a map of the forest, with the route you are following on it, you could ask children to mark the features on it as you go.

Mouse’s adventure in the deep dark wood

- Give each child or pair of children a one metre length of string. Ask the children to decide where to lay their string to create an adventurous route through the forest for a tiny mouse. A puddle can become a huge lake to cross, a stone is a cliff face. Ask the children to include as many physical and human features as they can (they can create their own, using soil, cones, leaves etc if they want to), then describe their route to the rest of the group.

Extension
This activity could be extended to create an adventurous route for snake, owl and fox. Different groups in the class could have a different character to work with.
Part 4
Vegetation – what types of trees are there?

The Forestry Commission plants and looks after the trees in the forest:

- so that they provide homes and food for animals and birds – discuss what kinds of wildlife live in, on or around the trees;
- to provide a sustainable supply of timber for people to make things – discuss what sort of everyday objects are made of wood;
- to create beautiful forests for people to visit and enjoy.

Different types of trees provide wood for making different things, and a variety of tree species provides habitats for different wildlife.

Ask the children to have a look around the area and investigate the trees. Challenge them to lean their Gruffalo picture against:

- an evergreen tree, then a deciduous tree, then a conifer and then a broadleaf;
- a tree with big flat leaves, then a tree with needles;
- a tree with rough bark, then one with smooth bark, then ones with nuts, seeds, flowers or catkins;
- the tallest and the shortest tree they can find, then the fattest and the thinnest.

Extension
You can also use keys to identify the species if appropriate to the ability of your group.

Cross-curricular links
Science – plants

Tree words:

- **Conifer**
  A tree with cones and needles e.g. Scots pine, Douglas fir; usually evergreen.

- **Broadleaf**
  A tree with broad flat leaves e.g. oak, silver birch; usually deciduous.

- **Evergreen**
  A tree which keeps its leaves all year round; mostly conifers (but not all e.g. holly is evergreen, but not a conifer).

- **Deciduous**
  A tree which loses its leaves in autumn; mostly broadleaves (but not all e.g. larch is a deciduous conifer).
Part 5
Maps – keys and symbols

Look at the Forestry Commission logo, which is made up of two trees – one conifer and one broadleaf. Symbols like these can be used on maps to represent the different sorts of trees in a forest area.

As well as symbols to show the types of trees in an area, maps show other features represented by symbols in a key.

- Give out copies of the Forestry Commission site map (either the site you are visiting, or the sample one on page 14).
- Look at the key and discuss how the features are shown e.g. a ‘P’ to represent a car park or a man and woman to represent toilets.

Symbols on Signposts
On Forestry Commission sites, similar symbols are often used on signposts. Look around the site to find some.

Extension
You could also look at an Ordnance Survey map of the forest, to see how features are represented by different symbols.
Part 6
Compass directions

Locate north using a map or compass.
- Point to north and then ask the children to work out where east, south and west are, with the aid of a rhyme if appropriate (e.g. naughty elephants squirt water).
- Ask questions about which direction you would have to walk to get to particular features e.g. rocks or hill.
- Explain that north is usually at the top of a map, and is often shown by an arrow with a capital N.
- Ask the children to walk ten paces north, do five skips to the west or twenty hops to the south, or to place their Gruffalo picture to the north of the picnic site, or the south of the rocks, or the east of the conifer tree.
- Ask each group to hide their Gruffalo picture at a certain number of paces in a direction; the other groups then look for them having been given the direction and number of paces.

Extension
This can be extended from four to eight compass directions for older or more able children.

Cross-curricular links
Mathematics

Part 7
Making maps

Divide the children into groups to create ground maps of the deep dark wood from natural materials.
- Choose an area that is fairly flat, and gently sweep the leaf litter aside to create a bare space;
- Collect four or more sticks to make a frame;
- Next, use twigs, small sticks, stones, leaves, pine cones etc to represent features on the map, including:
  - Snake’s logpile house
  - Owl’s tree
  - Fox’s underground home
  - rocks
  - stream
  - lake
  - any other features that they want to include
  - a key to show how each feature is represented.
Conclusion

You have investigated some of the features that are found in a forest.

You have learned that trees and forests are really important places for animals and birds to live, and for people to do all sorts of activities.

The Forestry Commission looks after lots of woods and forests in England. Trees are planted and cared for, so that they grow big enough to be cut down to make things, then more trees are planted. This means that there will always be a forest for wildlife to live in, and for people to enjoy.

Your forests and woods are cared for by the Forestry Commission for people, wildlife and timber.

forestry.gov.uk

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Geographical Features checklist

**Natural**
- Hill or Valley
- Stream, river or pond
- Mixed Vegetation (plants)
- Play area
- Path or track
- Rocks
- Forest
- Picnic table
- Soil
- Trail post
- Building
- Bridge

**Physical**

**Human**

**Man-made**
TOP TIP FOR TEACHERS

Cut me out or stick me on card to stand up!
Sample aerial photo
Sample Forestry Commission map

This map is from Symonds Yat in the Forest of Dean.