



Outdoor Learning with iPad

iPad usage outside of the classroom



The Decline of Outdoor Learning

A study by Stirling University revealed a concerning trend:

Primary school children spent an average of just seven minutes per week learning outdoors in 2022, compared to 30 minutes per week in 2014. This represents a dramatic 77% decrease in outdoor learning time over eight years.

This decline comes at a time when research increasingly demonstrates the profound benefits of outdoor education for children's physical health, mental wellbeing, and academic achievement.

There is growing recognition of the importance of outdoor learning, reflected in initiatives such as the proposed Outdoor Education Bill - requiring that every child be offered at least one outdoor education experience throughout both primary and secondary education.

Schools and trusts are increasingly challenged to balance curriculum demands, assessment pressures and safeguarding with the need to reconnect learning to the world beyond the classroom. Apple technology - particularly iPad, enables schools to extend learning outdoors without compromising structure, progress or outcomes, ensuring that learning time is protected while experiences are enriched.



2014 Average
Weekly Outdoor Learning Time



2022 Average
Weekly Outdoor Learning Time

Why Outdoor Learning Matters

Academic Performance

Outdoor learning enhances engagement, improves concentration, and reinforces curriculum concepts through real-world application. Students retain information better when they can connect abstract concepts to tangible experiences.

Physical Health

Regular outdoor activity combats sedentary lifestyles, improves cardiovascular health, and strengthens immune systems. Fresh air and natural light contribute to better sleep patterns and overall wellbeing.

Mental Wellbeing

Exposure to nature reduces stress and anxiety whilst building resilience. Outdoor learning environments foster emotional regulation, boost self-esteem, and create opportunities for mindfulness and reflection.

Environmental Stewardship

Direct interaction with nature cultivates environmental awareness and responsibility. Students who learn outdoors develop stronger connections to their local ecosystems and have the potential to become advocates for sustainability.

How iPad Transforms Outdoor Learning



Bridge the Digital Divide

iPad enables educators to take technology outdoors without compromising learning time. Students can access curriculum materials, record observations, and complete activities whilst fully immersed in natural environments – unlocking a new approach to learning.



Enhance Documentation

Built-in cameras and microphones allow students to capture evidence of learning in ways impossible with traditional methods. Every discovery becomes instantly documentable and shareable which helps students retain information better.



Extend Learning Opportunities

Augmented reality, identification apps, and interactive content transform any outdoor space into a rich learning environment. iPad brings digital resources directly to where students need them most.



Ensure Accessibility

Built-in accessibility features mean all students can participate fully in outdoor learning, regardless of physical or learning differences. iPad has a range of features that adapt to individual needs seamlessly.

Observation and Fieldwork

iPad transforms outdoor observation into structured fieldwork activities. Using the built-in camera, notes and data collection tools, students can actively observe, investigate and record the world around them – moving beyond passive observation to purposeful learning outdoors.



Students can record observations using photos, video and audio. Collect environmental data on weather, plants and habitats. Annotate images, label findings and capture measurements, and then reflect on observations using voice or written notes.

Outdoor fieldwork becomes a multi-sensory experience for students to capture what they see, hear and measure, then return to the classroom with evidence that supports discussion, assessment and deeper understanding across subjects such as science, geography and environmental studies.

By combining hands-on exploration with digital tools, iPad supports subjects such as science, geography and biology, helping teachers maintain curriculum rigour while giving students the freedom to explore and discover beyond the classroom.

Structured Observation

Evidence-Based Learning

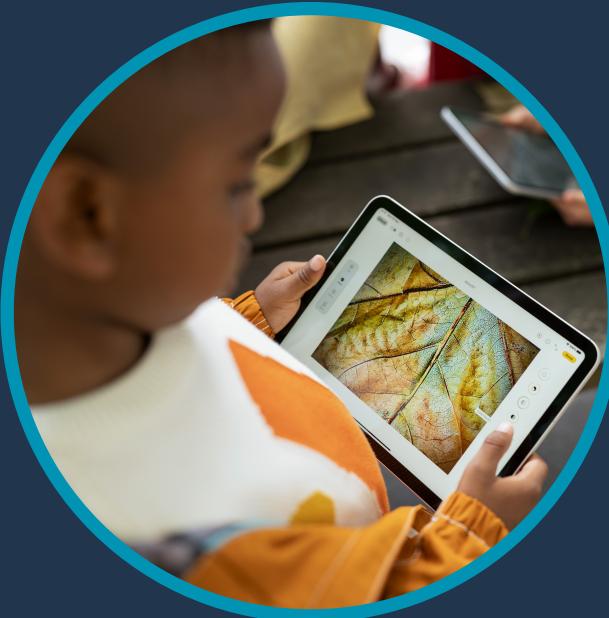
Reflection & Analysis

Creative Documentation

Outdoor learning creates rich experiences that deserve more than a worksheet.



iPad empowers students to document their learning through multiple creative mediums, allowing them to capture ideas, processes and reflections in ways that suit their individual strengths.



Students can use photos, video, audio and drawing tools to create digital portfolios that show how they learned, not just what they learned. From photo journals and short films, to narrated presentations and digital sketchbooks.



Creative documentation encourages deeper engagement and greater ownership of learning. These outputs also provide teachers with authentic evidence of understanding, support formative assessment and make learning visible.



Augmented Reality

Bringing Learning to Life

Augmented Reality transforms outdoor spaces into interactive learning environments, allowing students to explore concepts that are otherwise invisible, abstract or out of reach. Using iPad's advanced cameras and AR capabilities, digital content can be overlaid onto the real world, enriching outdoor learning without distracting from it.

Students can visualise historical events or buildings onto locations, explore anatomical structures layered onto living organisms, or reveal hidden systems such as underground root networks, river flows or geological formations. The possibilities are endless and these experiences can help learners make sense of complex ideas by anchoring them in real-world settings.

Learning becomes immersive and encourages curiosity while maintaining links to curriculum objectives across science, geography, history and STEM subjects. Students can move around digital models, investigate from different perspectives rather than static objects.

Supporting Active, Healthy Lifestyles

iPad supports active, outdoor learning by enhancing physical activity. Through purposeful lesson design, technology can be used to motivate movement, track progress and encourage reflection – while keeping students physically engaged with their environment.

iPad can be used to guide activities, measure performance and record progress through a range of outdoor lessons.

By combining physical activity with digital reflection, iPad helps make wellbeing measurable, meaningful and enjoyable whilst learning. Beyond the activity itself, it encourages students to understand the link between movement, health benefits and long-term lifestyle & wellbeing.

Movement Tracking

Health app and third-party fitness applications track steps, distance, and active minutes. This could be utilised during a range of outdoor lessons from science and geography to maths and PE.



Accessibility and Inclusion

Learning Without Barriers

iPad's built-in accessibility features ensure every student can participate fully in outdoor learning, regardless of SEND.



Visual Accessibility

VoiceOver describes images and content aloud. Magnifier assists students with low vision. High contrast modes and colour filters support various visual needs outdoors.



Hearing Support

Live Captions transcribe spoken instructions in real-time. Visual alerts replace audio cues. Hearing aid compatibility ensures clear audio in outdoor environments.



Motor Control

Switch Control, Voice Control, and AssistiveTouch enable device operation without traditional gestures.



Cognitive Support

Spoken Content reads text aloud. Guided Access maintains focus on single apps. Simplified interfaces reduce cognitive load in stimulating outdoor environments.



Universal Design: Features designed for accessibility benefit all learners. Text-to-speech supports EAL students. Visual aids help struggling readers. Adjustable interfaces accommodate individual preferences

Responsible Device Use Outdoors

Using iPad outdoors gives students the opportunity to develop responsible, independent and respectful technology habits in real-world settings. With clear expectations and structured activities, outdoor learning becomes a practical way to teach digital responsibility alongside curriculum content.

Students learn to take ownership of their device, understanding how and when technology should be used to support learning. They develop awareness of their environment – adapting behaviour to weather conditions, terrain and shared spaces, while additionally learning to care for equipment appropriately.

Outdoor use also reinforces positive digital citizenship. Learners practise safe, purposeful use of technology, balancing screen time with active exploration and recognising that devices are tools to enhance learning, not distractions from it.



Responsibility and Care

Students learn how to handle devices safely, protect equipment outdoors and use technology appropriately in different environments.

Independence and Ownership

Taking devices beyond the classroom builds trust, confidence and accountability, encouraging students to manage their own learning tools responsibly.

Environmental Awareness

Learners adapt device use based on weather, lighting and surroundings, developing practical decision-making skills and respect for shared outdoor spaces.

Collaboration and Communication

Connecting learning, ideas & people beyond the classroom



Outdoor learning thrives on shared experiences. iPad enables students to collaborate, communicate and co-create wherever learning takes place.



Students can work together to capture findings, share projects and discuss ideas in real time. From documenting fieldwork to presenting outcomes, iPad supports teamwork even in outdoors.



Collaboration continues beyond the session itself. Learners can bring shared evidence back into the classroom, reflect together, compare results and communicate learning clearly to peers and teachers. This strengthens understanding, encourages discussion and supports inclusive participation, ensuring every student has a voice.





Are you ready for some eXtraordinary thinking?

To find out how XMA can support your organisation with Apple technology and outdoor learning initiatives, get in touch with our education specialists.

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