

You Can... Set up treasure hunts

Treasure hunts are fun. They are often best done outside in the warmer weather and they are very motivating and exciting. Organising a treasure hunt can seem like a lot of work, but if you plan your clues carefully enough – and laminate them – the same set of clues can be recycled in a different order, so a little effort now can have children reading for weeks to come.

Thinking points

- Before you plan a treasure hunt there are some obvious issues to consider around the children's safety and supervision and these factors are likely to determine the extent of the treasure hunt you can create. Will, for example, your whole class be outside all at the same time, or will you be sending them out in small groups with a trusted adult or older children?
- To some extent, the opportunities afforded by your outside space will also limit your activities. City centre schools with tarmac playgrounds will be the base for a different kind of treasure hunt than from suburban and country schools with extensive playing fields or adventure playgrounds. However, none of these constraints affect your ability to organise a treasure hunt for your children – they just impact on the space and places you can use.

Tips, ideas and activities

- Treasure hunts can take place in as small a space as a sand tray. Sandpit treasure hunts can serve a number of purposes:
 - To match objects with their initial letters.
 - To find all the letters needed to spell a word.
 - To match an object (in the sand) with its word (not in the sand).
 - To find an object and match it with a clue (for example, a plastic cat could be found to match the clue, 'I have four legs').
- Classroom or playground treasure hunts can involve more reading:
 - Take a photograph of a soft toy sitting in an easily identified place. Put a letter or a word in that place for children to find, record and leave.
 - Teach vocabulary for prepositions (*in, on, under, behind, in front, beside* and so on). Give children photographs of objects together with the preposition, or even the sentence 'Look under the...' and ask them to look there for the treasure. Again, the treasure should be something children can see, record and then leave for others to find.
 - Match clues to photographs (for example, 'Inside a brown pot with a hole in the bottom. Could be inside a flower pot.') and then ask children to find the object and the treasure.
 - Write clues to places and hide the treasure there.
- In each of these treasure hunts, children should expect to find part of the treasure at each place. They will then need to use all of the separate 'treasures' to solve some kind of a puzzle.

