

EXPLORING THE SHORES

Early Years Resource Guide



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INTRODUCTION

Following our online video sessions, Galway Atlantaquaria and Galway Childcare Committee would like to share some ideas and knowledge to prepare and inspire you to explore your local shores or woodland areas with young children in your care.



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'The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper.' (W.B. Yeats).

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The Early Years 'Exploring the Shore' programme and resource guide includes:

Five Online Videos

Session 1: Planning an Early Years 'Exploring the Shores' Beach School session.
<https://vimeo.com/519075399> Password: Beach2020

Session 2: Dr. Nóirín Burke: Introducing Early Years Educators about the 'Wonders of the Seashore'. <https://vimeo.com/519021450> Password: Beach2020

Session 3: Making Connections from Early Years Beach School Experiences (Aistear; the Emergent & Inquiry Based Curriculum). <https://vimeo.com/519019402> Password: Beach2020

Session 4: Discussing Early Years Beach School Resource Pack.
<https://vimeo.com/519020015>
Password: Beach2020

Session 5: Virtual 'Exploring the Shores' Tour. Session 5 is a new addition to the training programme, we hope you enjoy.
<https://vimeo.com/519123324>
Password Beach2020

Session 5 is a new addition to the training programme, we hope you enjoy.



EARLY YEARS EXPLORING THE SHORES

The aim of the 'Exploring the Shores' programme for early years services was designed to ignite an interest in what their local natural environments have to offer. The beauty of this beach school experience is that it allows the children and educators the freedom and space to explore and investigate together, which fits perfectly with Aistear: the Emergent and Inquiry Based Curriculum. The children and educators also have the opportunity to ask questions and discover new information about plant and sea life, tides, the ocean and about how to care for the environment. This resource is a guide to support early years educators on their journey before, during and after the 'Exploring the Shores' programme. The guide will also equip early years educators with useful and practical information about the Beaches in Galway City and County and key safety considerations when planning a day at the beach.

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Before planning your session on the beach, refer to Session 1 online video – Planning an Early Years 'Exploring the Shores' Beach School Session for more information.

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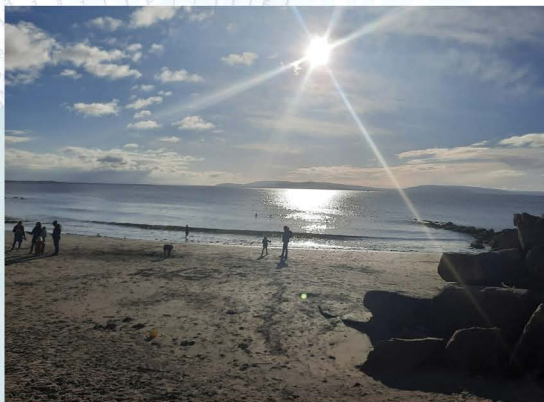
- We recommend you visit the beach a day before you intend to bring your group. Beaches are very changeable areas and can be affected by storms or heavy rainfall. Ensure there is suitable access to the beach for the group and make a note of nearest facilities.
- Plan your visit to the beach carefully. Take into consideration the weather forecast and the tides. You can find Galway tide tables on www.sailing.ie. Plan to visit the beach two hours before low tide so there will be enough space on the beach for your group to explore.



- Know your beach – there can be slippery rocks or raised areas that can be cut off by the incoming tide very quickly. Set visual boundaries for the group so the children know where they can explore and where are off limits, flags or bunting can be used to help mark out the area.

For a full list of how to plan a trip to the seashore and a seashore conservation code, see the '*Explorers Planning Guide for Primary Schools Teachers - Seashore Safaris and Field Trips*' in the Teachers Resources section of www.marine.ie

RECOMMENDED BEACHES IN GALWAY CITY



- **Ladies Beach, Salthill** - This is a sandy beach with few stones. Ramp for access and steps down to the beach. Next to the sandy beach there is a section of beach covered in small rocks, good for comparison. Toilet facilities and parking available on the prom.

- **Grattan Beach, Salthill** - Ramp for access. Portable toilet facilities usually available during the summer season. Sandy beach, rock pools on middle shore during low tide. Parking available within a short walk on Grattan Road or the prom.

- **Ballyloughane Beach, Renmore** - Sandy beach with some rock pools exposed at low tide. Toilet facilities and parking available, though a narrow road and barrier means buses will have to park back from the beach, before you go under the railway bridge. Ramp for access to the beach. Small sitting area at the west side of the beach, behind the access road, and small green area to the east. This beach has some black anoxic sand or sediment, which is caused by lack of aeration due to slope and shape of the beach.

RECOMMENDED BEACHES IN COUNTY GALWAY

- **Aillebrack, Ballyconneely** - Beautiful sandy beach with rock pools. It has limited parking (not suitable to buses) and no toilet facilities that we are aware of.

- **Traught / Doorus Beach, Kinvara** - Sandy/rocky beach with rock pools. Toilet facilities and parking available onsite.



RECOMMENDED BEACHES IN COUNTY GALWAY CONT'D

- **Galway An Trá Mór, Coill Rua, Indreabhán** - Beautiful sandy beach with rock pools. Parking and Toilets onsite, however a barrier may restrict access to buses.
- **Galway Dog's Bay, Roundstone** - Beautiful sandy beach with rock pools. Access by narrow road, some parking available, not suitable for buses. No toilet facilities that we are aware of.
- **Glassilany, Killary** - Beautiful sandy beach with rock pools. Small area for parking cars, not suitable for buses, no toilets facilities that we are aware of.



LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The following website has a lot of video content and resources on animals and much more which may be beneficial to show the children before their beach visit.

<https://www.nationalaquarium.ie/aquakids.html>

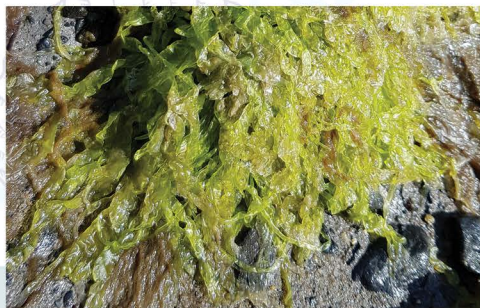


The following learning experiences can occur before, during and after the 'Exploring the Shores' Session. Remember that being spontaneous is key, observing and knowing what the child is interested in or questioning, is what will make these learning experiences meaningful.

Don't forget to link the children's thinking and learning to Aistear, this is a wonderful experience to document.






TYPES OF SEaweeds

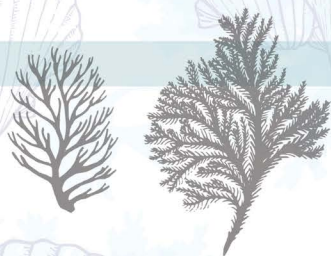
Find different seaweeds and compare them. Seaweeds are flowers that live underwater and on the beach. Compare the seaweeds to plants that live on land. This experience can be carried out during the session and in the Early Years setting afterwards, using a sensory table where children can reflect and revisit the learning.



POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE CHILDREN

Remember when asking questions, think about what the children are observing, noticing and what they know already.

-  **How do they look, feel, smell?**
-  **What is the same, what is different?**
-  **Which are longer, wider, bigger or smaller?**
-  **What colours are they?**
-  **On what part of the beach were they found? (up in the sand or down by the water?)**



STONE SOUNDS

Consider having a stone station where the children choose or are invited to play and explore the different types of stones that are found on the beach. The children can compare the different sounds by tapping, rubbing them together, tapping them on the ground, scraping them together.

Documentation idea:

Observe what the children are discussing with each other, what are they exploring? What are their discoveries? For example, do they notice a pattern of sound? Do different stones make different sounds?



Mathematical thinking, Sorting, Sequencing, Patterns, Numeracy

AT THE SHORE: FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND

Search the sand for prints. Are there footprints, dog paws, bird claws?



Possible questions to ask the children

- 🐾 What might have made the prints?
- 🐾 Where did they come from?
- 🐾 Where did the prints lead?
- 🐾 Are the people/animals that made the prints still there?

Problem-solving, Mapping, Visualising, Balancing and Perseverance

Props/Materials

Create a story sack about the people and animals that made the prints. The story sack can be brought outside, placed near the sensory table or in the book corner.

SAND INVESTIGATIONS

Sand investigations – if handheld magnifying pots are available, collect a small sample of sand and put it in a small white container – yoghurt pots work well.



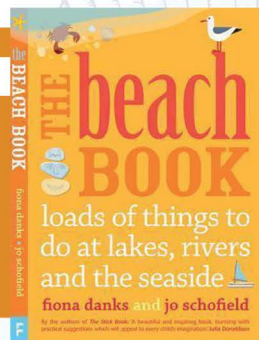
Ordering, Size, Texture, Patterns, Sculpting & Creative Expression

What to observe:

What can the child see when they look at sand up close?
What are the different shapes they can see? How is sand made?
Think about open-ended investigative questions. For example 'I wonder what happens to the sand when it gets wet?'

STONE TOWERS

This experience can be set up by the practitioner on the beach for the children to see and create their own sculpture and masterpiece. Using the resource pack, refer to page 44 of 'The Beach Book' by Fiona Danks & Jo Schofield.



Possible conversations and questions

- 🐚 How many stones can we stack on top of each other?
- 🐚 What shapes, colours or textures are the stones?
- 🐚 Are they all the same or are some different?
- 🐚 Why do we think some stones are smooth and some are rough?

These questions provide the ideal opportunity for the children and educator to research and investigate together. Using anecdotal notes, the educator can document the children's ideas, findings and understanding of the world around them.

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Remember to collect some stones in zip lock bags to bring home or to the preschool setting.

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DISCOVERING SEASHELLS

Children can collect as many shells and stones as they can. As a group, sort these into groups of matching shells and stones. Children can group these according to size, colour and texture. Create patterns using the shells and stones. These can be arranged in order from the smallest to the biggest.

Seashore snail survey:

[Click here](#) to view the Seashore Snail Survey, a fun activity to do with the children during the Beach School experience.

Possible conversations & questions

- 🐚 Do all the shells look the same?
- 🐚 Press a shell into the wet sand and remove again, did a pattern of the shell remain?
- 🐚 Describe the shells – shape, colour, texture. Children can pick their favourite and describe why they made their choice. Observing carefully the child's choice of shell, what they are exploring, what are they curious about?

SAND SCULPTURES

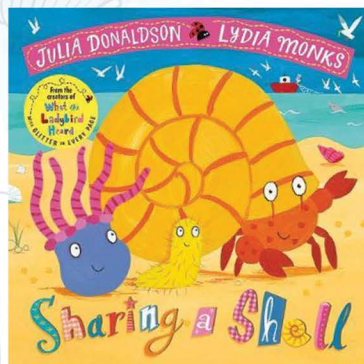
Children can create art on the beach using any of the seashores resources. Encourage the children to use seaweeds that are washed up on the beach and are not attached to rocks for their art, as these are living plants.



Sharing a Shell by Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Lydia Monks



Amazing Sea Shells by Carmel T. Madigan – [Click here to view](#)



Bringing the learning back into the early years setting after your visit to the shore.

The following ideas can be carried out after the 'Exploring the Shores Session'. Compare the sights, sounds and smells of the beach to the sights, sounds and smells the children experience in the outdoor and indoor learning environment within the early years setting. Ask the children to close their eyes and be silent for just a moment.

Possible questions to ask the children

🐚 How can you tell that you are outside and not inside, what is different, what is the same?

Props/Materials

Sound recordings of the sea/seagulls and birds singing in the trees. Sensory table – sand, seaweed, shells, photos etc



Exploring the Shores: Role Play

Each child chooses a seashore animal they would like to represent. Prompts for the children to consider.

Where does your animal live?

Does your animal have a family?

What is your animals favourite food?

Useful Resource for this learning experience: Helicopter Stories:

makebelievearts.co.uk

earlychildhoodireland.ie

CAPTURING THE CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Think about how to make the children's thinking visible and their learning meaningful. How will the children's ideas, interests and questions be documented to support further inquiry?

How will children revisit their experiences and understandings?

How will you share the children's experiences with the parents and families?



Environmental Awareness – If there is litter on the beach, children can describe where it came from. Can they tell a brief story of how the item ended up on the beach? Clean coasts have a 'Break up with plastics' campaign 'Think before you flush'.

[Click here](#) for further investigation and research.

Open-ended questions to think about before, during and after Beach School

- 🐚 What can you hear?
- 🐚 What do you think about?
- 🐚 What might happen next?
- 🐚 How does that work?
- 🐚 I wonder how that happened?
- 🐚 Tell me what it looks like?
- 🐚 What would happen if?
- 🐚 Is there another one like this?

Useful Resource Section

- 🐚 National Biodiversity Data Centre: [Click here](#)
- 🐚 Birdwatch Ireland – seabird identification: [Click here](#)
- 🐚 Explorers Education Programme – Preparing for the beach and information about seashore animals. [Click here](#)
- 🐚 Scoil na Mara Youtube videos. [Click here](#)
- 🐚 National Aquarium: Information about species, photos of Irish fish & videos. [Click here](#)
- 🐚 Beaches in Galway City and County. [Click here](#)

TESTIMONIAL

Linking in with Galway Atlantaquaria and Galway Childcare Committee for our initial Beach School session for young children was a magical and invaluable opportunity. As a team of Early Years Practitioners, children, parents and grandparents, the knowledge and expertise gained on the day reinforced our passion for outdoor play and learning and ignited a love for exploring the shores and woodlands in our locality.

Having had time to reflect on the experience, I would revisit our ethos which is in line with Aistear the Emergent and Inquiry-based curriculum and to remind ourselves to 'slow things down' and to 'enjoy the moment' and to allow the children time and space to explore their surroundings. While planning our visit in advance, I wanted to pack as many experiences for the children as possible, but the reality is, like any other environment, the children will inform the adults who in turn will extend their thinking, learning and researching.

Bringing the experience and knowledge back to our preschool was a key part of investigating and finding the answers to the children's questions and interests. We created a sensory bin and used some of the materials gathered from our visit including, stones, shells, sand and seaweed. Some children introduced litter that they had seen on the beach, a real learning opportunity.

This experience opened lots of possibilities and ideas for our practice which involved our community of parents. We were fortunate to have parents who work on the Celtic Explorer visit us with some samples of fish and even sharks! We could not have asked for a better outcome from this experience and we are so grateful to Galway Atlantaquaria and Galway Childcare Committee for working with us to create special memories with the children and families in our care.

Geraldine Doran – Owner of The Wonder Years Preschool Galway.



Weight, Balance, Planning,
Teamwork, Problem-solving,
Constructing

Mark-making, Representations,
Early Literacy, Expression



This project was brought to you by Galway Childcare Committee and Galway Atlantaquaria funded by Healthy Ireland.

Thank you to all the service providers, parents, grandparents and children who took part in the Early Years 'Exploring the Shores' programme and made it possible. For more information or support about the Early Years 'Exploring the Shores' programme, please contact Galway Childcare Committee on 091 752039 or email mail@galwaychildcare.com