

How to build a den



Den-building materials

Get everyone to set about collecting natural materials from the woodland floor. Make sure you don't break off living branches or damage trees. If you use any unnatural materials such as string or rope, remember to take them home at the end of the day.

You will need:

- long, straight branches and sticks
- lots of thin, bendy sticks
- materials to cover your den, such as dried leaves, twigs and grass

Beware. Make sure to avoid picking or walking through bracken, as it can be home to ticks.

How to build your den

Coming up with your own den design is part of the fun, but here are a couple of simple ideas to get you started.

Teepee-style den

1. Find a tree with a fork in the branches that's quite low down.

2. Make a frame by propping some long, straight sticks in the fork and fanning them out. Also make sure that any branches are really secure – you don't want them slipping.
3. Weave bendy sticks in and out of the upright sticks to make the walls. Leave a gap at head height for a window.
4. Cover your den with natural materials so it's camouflaged and weatherproof. You could use mud to stick them on.
5. Scatter a carpet of dried leaves on the floor to make your den extra cosy.

Tent-shaped den

1. Find two forked trees that are close together and place a long stick between them.
2. Prop a row of sticks against it on each side so you end up with a tent shape.
3. Weave your bendy sticks in and out of the upright and add your plant materials.

Make a mini den

This activity is a lovely way for very small children to have a go at den building. Simply collect a handful of small sticks and prop them up against a tree trunk or fallen branch to make a mini den. Make the inside of your shelter nice and cosy with some fallen leaves. Now it's ready for child's favourite teddies or dolls.

Don't forget to dismantle your den

Before you head home, please remember to take your den down. On your next visit you can have fun building it all over again, or you can experiment with a different design!