# Nature Play place audit

There are different ways that you could structure the assessment of your woodland nature play space. Chose one of the following three approaches use to to audit this woodland:

## 1. David Sobels’ Children & Nature Design Principles

By observing children interacting with nature he identified seven “play motifs.” These motifs are common among all children regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or ecosystem when they have safe free time in nature.

1. Making forts and special places

2. Playing hunting and gathering games

3. Shaping small worlds

4. Developing friendships with animals

5. Constructing adventures

6. Descending into fantasies

7. Following paths and figuring out shortcuts

## Criteria for an enriched play environment

(taken from Bob Hughes, summarised in ‘Best Play’)

Play provision should provide opportunities for:

1. A varied and interesting physical environment
2. Challenge in relation to the physical environment
3. Playing with the natural elements - earth, water, fire, air
4. Movement - e.g. running, jumping, rolling, climbing, balancing
5. Manipulating natural and fabricated materials
6. Stimulation of the five senses
7. Experiencing change in the natural and built environment
8. Social interactions
9. Playing with identity
10. Experiencing a range of emotions

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## Humans in landscape – what interests and nurtures them (landscape architecture & neuro-psychology)

Appleton (1996) lists these factors as:

* Nest-building potential
* Food supply (paths = animals = food somewhere in the back of our brains)
* Water supply
* Shelter-seeking
* Places to sleep (or rest)
* Routes to explore
* Routes to escape.
* Prospect (being up high, looking down over area)
* Refuge – places to say safe

More recent work has pointed to our tendency to evaluate the safety of a landscape by cues from other living creatures, such as birdsong (Barkham 2011).

**Routes to building nature connection**

Nature connection is understanding and feeling ourselves physically and emotionally as a part of nature, in relationship to all the rest of nature – small and large, near and far. Some key routes to this are below. Where and how can we achieve this on our site?

* Aesthetic (physical attraction and appeal of nature)
* Humanistic (emotional bonding with nature)
* Moralistic (ethical and spiritual relation to nature)
* Naturalistic (exploration and discovery of nature)
* Symbolic (nature as a source of language and imagination)