

# Build a den

## Get started

Building dens in the woods is fantastic fun!

You don't need any special equipment, just fallen branches and twigs to use as building materials.

To get started, find a sturdy, living, Y-shaped tree and prop the longest branch you can find against the 'Y'. This will be your den's frame.

Lean other branches and sticks against the long branch until you have a wall that shelters you from cold winds. You could put sticks on both sides of the branch to build two walls, but remember to leave a doorway so you can get in and out! Fill in the gaps between the branches with fallen leaves to make your den really cosy and wind-proof.

This is a really simple way to build a den. Once you've mastered this technique, try experimenting to see what other types of den you can build.



This activity was created by staff at the Woodland Trust and Westonbirt Arboretum

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## Make it special

Decorate your den to make it extra special!

- Sweep out the inside of your den and find small logs for seats.
- Decorate your den with fallen flowers or leaves.
- Write a message with sticks in front of your den. It could say 'welcome' or 'KEEP OUT!'
- Make a den garden. Build a fence of twigs stuck into the ground to mark out the area, 'plant' pine cones in neat rows and make beds of different coloured fallen leaves.



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## Build a mini den

A fun way to practice den-making is to build mini dens using small sticks propped up against a tree trunk or fallen branch.

Create a tiny shelter for a teddy, doll or finger puppet.

This is a great activity for little brothers and sisters who aren't big enough to help build a bigger den too.



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## Watch out and take care

Use your common sense when building dens:

- Be careful when moving branches and look out for other people. Walk forward and drag larger branches rather than carrying them. This helps to avoid tripping people up or bashing them!
- Be especially careful with large, heavy branches. Make sure they're secure leaning against a tree or each other, so they don't slip off and bump people.
- Only use fallen branches to create dens. Trees are living things and hold onto what they still need it.
- Don't use bracken. It can be home to ticks which could make you poorly.



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