



LESSONS  
IN GRASS

# OUTDOOR ADVENT ADVENTURES

Let us **seek out natural places** where we can experience the Advent season full of **peace, joy, discovery, creation, play**, wonder and, most importantly, some **time spent together**.

Instead of hustle and bustle, shopping and stress, **simplify your Advent time** and discover with your children how to bring more quiet and sensory experiences, **crafting** with your hands, **playing outside, relaxing** and **snuggling** into the winter holidays.

**Let's get inspired by nature** as it hibernates when everything slows down and calms. Nature is resting and gaining strength for the next and more active part of the year. Now it is colder, quieter and there are less colours and less light outside. All this naturally nudges us to **have more peaceful days** when we, in our **human world**, are sometimes forced in the **opposite direction**. Advent, as it is now, is usually so full of lights, sounds, challenges and experiences and there seems to be more and more things that need doing. The more tasks we want to accomplish, the more anxious and overwhelmed we become. **Our children then take this pressure from us.**

Let's try to slow down a bit this year and experience a **slightly different winter festive time with the children..**

Let's **connect to nature and its rhythms**. Take a little time and perceive the sounds, shapes, colours and temperatures outside. There is no need to change everything but every day we can create at least a small island of peace and comfort. Let the children experience the natural world now, when it's **slower** and the **sensations are gentler and quieter**. This will also give them the opportunity to give their oversaturated senses a little break from the world where something is always flashing, shining and beckoning.





# HOW DO WE DO IT?

1. **Every day there is a challenge waiting for you.** It is entirely up to you when and how many you experience out there.
2. We recommend that you **print and cut out the challenge cards.** You can then hide them (one each day or all at once) in a place you agree (in a box, an advent calendar, a toilet paper roll, a surprise bag, under a breakfast plate, in an outdoor hiding place, and you can certainly think of even more hilarious pranks).
3. Each day the children open or find their **surprise** - their challenge for the day. Ideally, along with the challenge, they will find a **natural item or object that invites them outside.** You can also add some candy or a sweet if you wish.
4. The most important thing is to **go out during the day** - for a short walk, or ideally on a proper exploration quest to conquer the challenge of the day.
5. (Often, we **gather at home**, snuggled in blankets with a warm mug of tea, **creating, conversing,** or lost in captivating stories together.).



LET'S CONNECT WITH NATURE EVERY DAY. LET'S USE ITS POWER FOR RECHARGING OUR BATTERIES AS WELL AS FOR SOME REST AND A TUNE-UP. WE WISH YOU A PEACEFUL WINTER TIME OUTSIDE.

ADVENT CHALLENGES

1 FIND A STONE

LESSONS IN GRASS

ADVENT CHALLENGES

2 FIND A LEAF

LESSONS IN GRASS

ADVENT CHALLENGES

3 FIND A CONIFER SPRIG

LESSONS IN GRASS

ADVENT CHALLENGES

4 FIND A TWIG

LESSONS IN GRASS

ADVENT CHALLENGES

5 GIVE TO YOUR ANIMAL NEIGHBOURS

LESSONS IN GRASS

ADVENT CHALLENGES

6 FIND A PINECONE

LESSONS IN GRASS

## 2. CHALLENGE: FIND A LEAF

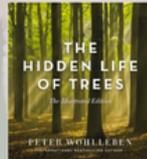
Try to find a leaf whose veins resemble the lines in your palm.

Run around looking for **fallen leaves**. You may have to dig them out from under the snow. Yay, for that too is a challenge! You might also find dry leaves still somewhere on a tree. And then the task is easy. Try to find **a leaf whose veins have a pattern most similar to your palm**. You can tear off a piece of the leaf or cut it into a smaller circle and try to connect it to the life line of your palms.

On the way home, you can tell stories that take place in the future. In olden times, the future was foretold by reading the lines on the palm of the hand. So try to read not only from your palms, but also from the leaves. **Create a story for the tree and for yourself**. You can continue the story at home in the warmth, snuggled up in blankets, in dim light, by candlelight or in complete darkness.



**TIP for reading together:** The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben



## 1. CHALLENGE: FIND A STONE

Find a stone outside to tell your wishes to.

Go out together and during your walk, choose a **stone that interests you**. Take it in your hand, greet it and, if it wants, invite it home or out on another adventure.

Then, when at home, sit at the table or by the fire or next to the wood stove and light a candle then have everyone in the family write an **Advent list**. These lists should not be just a lot of wishes and gifts you want. Write mainly about experiences, places and moments that each of you would like to experience during this year's Advent season. In addition, write what you are grateful for, what has made you happy.

### My thanks

(Finish the sentences and feel free to write your own.)

- Today I am grateful for....
- This year I thank you for...
- I am glad that I experienced...

### My wishes

(Try to answer the questions and feel free to add your own.)

- What would I like to experience this month?
- Where would I like to go on a trip?
- What would I like to receive?



**TIP for reading together:** The Stone Soup (a folk tale)

## 4. CHALLENGE: FIND A TWIG

Find a cherry tree in your area. Ask it for a twig or two.

Today is **St. Barbara's Day** and on this day our ancestors put **cherry branches into vases** to see if they would bloom by Christmas Day. Try it yourself. The trees already have **energy stored in their buds** for spring. They are just waiting for spring to come when they will be able to sprout their beautiful green leaves or white flowers.

Get inspired by trees. Also, during this period, try to **experience some well-being, peace, and draw energy** to get ready for spring outdoor fun.



**TIP for reading together:** Slow down... and sleep tight by Rachel Williams



## 3. CHALLENGE: FIND A CONIFER SPRIG

Make your own Advent wreath, candlestick or branch.

Advent has many traditions and customs. One of them is the **lighting of Advent candles**, one every week.

Go for a walk, this time with a basket or bag and scissors or a knife.

Where possible, gently collect a **few twigs of conifers** and some other natural items, then make a **wreath, candlestick, decorated branch or hanging ornament for above a table or window**. It's not about size or perfection. It is important to create this together, with our own hands, and to perfume the home with natural materials and with the experiences from our outdoor expeditions.

It can be something very simple like a plate or tray on which you can arrange your treasures from the outside as you get them. Place the plate in the middle of the table and enjoy yourselves as you add what you will **discover outside during the whole month**. You can also leave Advent decorations outside on the windowsill or in the garden. They will last longer and you will have one more reason to go outside when you want to admire them.



## 6. CHALLENGE: FIND A PINECONE

Go outside and look for a place where there are some pinecones.

Pinecones are almost everywhere around us. Find your **pinecone spot**. Too easy? Try to find **various shaped cones** from other types of conifers. When you collect a few, try to come up with a **game with your cones outside**. Hide them like treasures in an agreed-upon territory, throw them at a target, observe how their scales are regularly twisted into a precise helix. Make a cone family out of pine cones and build them a house. If you like to make things, try making an **ornament or a toy out of pine cones** at home or outside. You can try a pinecone garland, a wreath, a mouse, a squirrel or a tree. You can also assemble a cone orchestra and come up with different sounds that can be made with pinecones. You can also make a cone **hygrometer** and observe how changes to your cones can mark the humidity changes in the home and outside. You can look for **signs of residence outside**, observe variously bitten pinecones and find out who was snacking here.



## 5. CHALLENGE: GIVE TO YOUR ANIMAL NEIGHBOURS

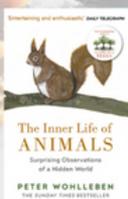
Today is the Feast of Giving. Figure out where and how you can prepare treats for your animal neighbours.

December 5 is International Volunteer Day and in some countries, the **eve of St. Nicholas Day** means gifts for children.

Go out and try to find a place where you can **give your gifts to someone** such as your **animal neighbours**. Put food into a feeder, decorate a tree with goodies or just sprinkle something on the ground for the forest animals. Just remember to think of their health and **prepare foods that are good for them**.



**TIP for reading together:** The Inner Life of Animals by Peter Wohlleben





ADVENT CHALLENGES

7 FIND AN ACORN

LESSONS IN GRASS



ADVENT CHALLENGES

FIND MOSS 8

LESSONS IN GRASS



ADVENT CHALLENGES

9 FIND AN APPLE

LESSONS IN GRASS



ADVENT CHALLENGES

10 FIND THE LIGHT

LESSONS IN GRASS



ADVENT CHALLENGES

11 FIND SOME BARK

LESSONS IN GRASS



ADVENT CHALLENGES

12 FIND A FEATHER

LESSONS IN GRASS

## 8. CHALLENGE: FIND MOSS

Discover a unique kingdom of moss.

Where can you **find moss** closest to you? How much of it is there? Where does it live and why? Where can you find large dense mats of moss?

Moss offers us **perfect little worlds**. Take your favourite little figurine (from Duplo, Lego or a wooden animal) and invite them to a soft game on the mossy carpet. **Examine them with a magnifying glass**. Try to paint or take a picture of them. Mossy plants do not have "tubes" (vascular bundles) for water distribution throughout the body. That's why they receive water through the entire surface of the leaves and usually live in humid places. They don't have much support in their bodies and individual plants can only grow to a small size but they did come up with a great idea. Mosses tend to grow in tightly-packed groups that support each other so they can grow taller than their surroundings. **Observe different types of mosses** and compare their size, branching, and leaves.



## 7. CHALLENGE: FIND AN ACORN

Find an acorn, with its cap, in your neighbourhood.

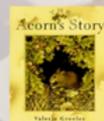
Try to find an oak tree old enough to have had acorns this year and **take a few of its nuts with you**. They are beautiful, smooth and slippery as well as rough. They fit perfectly in the hand. Your fingers will enjoy rolling the acorns around.

Take a look at the **shape of the acorn** and paint it. Try to **paint its face** and tell or act out a short story of its life. **What has it experienced so far?** What was its childhood like in the treetop? How did the trip down to the ground feel? What adventures will it experience? Try to talk to the acorn.

Are your fingers itching to **create**? Build a little **acorn elf**, a colourful pendant or anything else you can think of. Take an acorn cap and try whistling with it which creates a very strong sound. You can also try to plant a few acorns and put the small oak seedlings in the ground in spring or fall. Oak seedlings can make a beautiful gift for your loved ones.



**TIP for reading together:** The Acorn's Story by Valerie Greeley  
**TIP:** Get inspired by **Acorn Elves**



## 10. CHALLENGE: FIND THE LIGHT

Light a candle outside.

December 10 is **Human Rights Day** and **Worldwide Candle Lighting Day**.

Celebrate it with a memory. Wait until it gets a little dark. Go on an expedition to find a spot in gloom or darkness. Take out an advent wreath, candlestick or lantern and **light them**. Invite your loved ones for a joint walk and talk. You can observe the candle flame for a while in silence. Then **sing** together, and finally, **tell each other** what beautiful and special things you experienced today or this week and what you are looking forward to next week. It is very powerful to stop sometimes, **be silent together**, hold hands, then talk and listen to one another. The **darkness will make everything special** and the shared experience will be even stronger. Do not worry if it is too cold outside. Light a candle at home, turn off all the lights and imagine sitting by the fire like your ancestors once did. Talk, share, plan and see how the flame connects you.



**TIP for reading together:** One Wish by Michelle Harrison



## 9. CHALLENGE: FIND AN APPLE

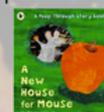
Where can you find an apple outside in a tree on the ground?

The apple is quite familiar to everyone, almost a banality really because apples are the **most widespread fruit in the world** but they are enjoyed by pretty much everyone and for some they are considered a **great delicacy**. Try to find the nearest apple tree to you. Go and say hi to it and **ask for one or more apples**.

On the other hand, you could take a few small apples from home and scatter them in a suitable place as a **snack for birds** and other animal neighbours. Later at home, try slicing the apples. Observe whether a **star shape** appears. **Dry** the slices and they may become **beautiful decorations** for the Christmas tree, for wreaths or for gift wrapping. And be sure to keep some of them for eating too as they are excellent for nibbling on during long winter evenings. **Apple tea** is also excellent. You can make tea by steeping just the apple peels in hot water.



**TIP for reading together:** A New House for Mouse by Petr Horáček



## 12. CHALLENGE: FIND A FEATHER

Try to catch a feather in nature.

They float around us with their lightness. On today's expedition, try to search for a **small or large feather in nature**. It is a great indicator that tells who has flown by or lives here. Have a good look at your newly found feather. How soft and graceful it is and yet, at the same time, how sturdy. Try to **examine it under a magnifying glass** and observe how the parts of the feather are connected and how they change colour. When you are finished exploring all of this, **try writing something with the feather tip**. Just a few strokes using puddle water on a tree stump or trunk. How did it go? If you have a stronger feather, you can trim the sharp end and make room for more of your "ink" so you can write longer. Lastly, you can make a **natural decoration** which should include a feather or two. Hang it on a stick with some string, decorate a cone, stick it in a wreath or just decorate your hair.



**TIP for reading together:** A Gift of Feathers by Ken Schept, Feathers by Phil Cummings



## 11. CHALLENGE: FIND SOME BARK

Discover the mysteries and secrets of tree bark.

Go on a mysterious quest and find out **how varied the bark of trees can be**. Look it over with your eyes and **explore its texture and folds** with your hands. **Sniff it**. Does the smell of the bark of different trees vary? Follow the shapes and shelters it creates.

Look for pieces of **fallen bark** and try to make something from them outside or at home. Containers used to be made from birch bark. Pieces of pine, larch or sycamore bark are good for **finding the shapes, animals or figures**.

You can find game details here:

<https://lessonsingrass.com/lessons/autumn-challenges/october/#bark>



**TIP for reading together:** Toby Alone by Timothée de Fombelle

