GoalTodo

Spend more time outdoors: one weekend hour, then two hours a week

Spend more time outdoors

13 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Feb 28

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

An hour outside this weekend

Start

- [ ] Pick one green or blue place within about 15 minutes of home: a park, a river or canal path, a wood, a beach, a community garden or your own garden
  10 min
- [ ] Put a time in your calendar for Saturday or Sunday, as you would for anything else you've said yes to
  2 min
- [ ] Spend an hour outside in that place. Walk, sit, potter or look around: any pace counts. Two half-hours across the weekend count too
  1 hour

Done when: You've spent an hour outside this weekend, and next weekend's time is in your calendar

Sticking point: The weather looks wrong. Unless it's dangerous, go anyway with a coat and a hat. If an hour in one go feels long, split it into two half-hours, one each day.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

Same time, and a bag by the door

Start

- [ ] Check the forecast on Friday, and choose Saturday or Sunday for your hour
  5 min
- [ ] Pack a small bag you keep by the door: a waterproof, a warm layer, a hat, water and a bag for rubbish
  10 min
- [ ] An hour outside, at the time in your calendar
  1 hour

Done when: You've had your second weekend hour outside, and your bag is packed by the door

Sticking point: Plans fill the weekend. Pick a backup slot now, such as Sunday morning if Saturday goes, so a busy day moves the hour rather than cancelling it.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Somewhere new, close to home

Start

- [ ] Look at a map for green and blue space within about two miles of home that you haven't been to: a park, a nature reserve, a towpath, a churchyard, a stretch of coast or river
  15 min
- [ ] An hour outside in one of the new places
  1 hour
- [ ] If you can, step outside in daylight for ten minutes on two weekdays, such as at lunchtime
  10 min

Done when: You've spent an hour outside this weekend somewhere you hadn't been before

Dec 21–27
Week 4

A month of weekends

Start

- [ ] Ask someone to come with you this weekend: a friend, a neighbour, a family member, or your children
  5 min
- [ ] An hour outside, on your own or with company
  1 hour
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've spent an hour or more outside four weekends in a row: a month of weekends

Sticking point: If no one can come, go alone. Company is a bonus, not a condition.

Dec 28–Jan 3
Week 5

Ninety minutes

Build

- [ ] Time outside at the weekend, in one visit or split across both days
  90 min
- [ ] If you can, ten or fifteen minutes outside in daylight on two weekdays
  10 to 15 min
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've spent at least ninety minutes outside this weekend

Sticking point: Ninety minutes in one go can feel like a lot to fit in. Split it: an hour on Saturday and half an hour on Sunday counts the same.

Jan 4–10
Week 6

Two hours a week

Build

- [ ] Time outside at the weekend, in one visit or across both days
  1 to 2 hours
- [ ] [ ] If the weekend didn't cover two hours, make up the rest with short weekday visits outside
  15 to 30 min
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've spent two hours outside this week, at least an hour of it at the weekend

Sticking point: Two hours is the amount the University of Exeter study linked with better health and wellbeing. It doesn't need to be hard exercise, and it doesn't need to be one long visit.

Jan 11–17
Week 7

Something to do out there

Build

- [ ] Choose one thing to do outside this weekend: a picnic, birdwatching, a photo walk, gardening, a game in the park, reading on a bench, or a litter pick
  10 min
- [ ] Your weekend time outside, doing it
  1 to 2 hours
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've spent your weekend time outside doing something you chose

Sticking point: Some weekends just going out feels pointless. Having a small reason to be there, such as a flask of tea and a bench with a view, makes it easier to go.

Jan 18–24
Week 8

Out in the weather

Build

- [ ] Look at the forecast and dress for it: layers and a waterproof in cold or wet weather, light clothes, a hat and sunscreen in sun or heat
  10 min
- [ ] Your weekend time outside, whatever the weather does, unless it's dangerous
  1 to 2 hours
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've spent at least an hour outside this weekend in weather you'd usually stay in for

Sticking point: Rain is the most common reason to stay in. A waterproof, a hat and a shorter route are usually enough. Save the long outing for the dry weekend.

Jan 25–31
Week 9

Know the rules of the countryside

Widen

- [ ] Read the access rules for where you live: the Countryside Code in England and Wales, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in Scotland, or elsewhere the rules from your local park, council or national park service
  15 min
- [ ] Find a public footpath or open space near you on a map, and follow it on your weekend outing
  1 to 2 hours
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've read the rules for where you live and followed a footpath or open space you hadn't used before

Feb 1–7
Week 10

A longer outing

Widen

- [ ] Plan a half-day somewhere a bit further away: a country park, a forest, a stretch of coast or a hill with a path. Check the route, the forecast and, at the coast, the tide times
  20 min
- [ ] Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back
  2 min
- [ ] Your half-day outside, with water, food and a warm layer
  2 to 4 hours
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've spent a half-day outside, and someone knew where you were

Sticking point: If a half-day won't fit this month, keep your usual two hours and do the longer outing next month. The weekly habit matters more.

Feb 8–14
Week 11

Grow something, or give something back

Widen

- [ ] Find a community garden, allotment group, conservation volunteering day or park friends group near you, or plant something in a pot or a garden
  20 min
- [ ] Your weekend time outside, joining in or tending what you planted
  1 to 2 hours
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've spent your weekend time outside growing something or helping look after a green space

Feb 15–21
Week 12

Early or late

Widen

- [ ] Check the times of sunrise and sunset for your weekend
  2 min
- [ ] Go out for the start or the end of the day: a dawn walk, a sunset, or the first stars on a clear evening. Take a warm layer and a torch
  1 hour
- [ ] Your usual weekend time outside, if the early or late hour didn't cover it
  1 hour
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've been outside at sunrise, sunset or after dark this weekend, as part of your weekend time

Feb 22–28
Week 13

Three months of weekends

Keep going

- [ ] Your weekend time outside
  1 to 2 hours
- [ ] Look back: which places and times worked, and which didn't. Write down your three favourite places and one for bad weather
  15 min
- [ ] Put your weekend time in your calendar as a repeating event for the next three months, and list one new place or idea for each month
  15 min
- [ ] Add this week's minutes outside to your tally: a running total in a notebook or on your phone
  2 min

Done when: You've spent time outside thirteen weekends in a row: three months, with the next three in your calendar

Milestones

Sun, Dec 6	An hour outside this weekend
Sun, Dec 27	Every weekend for a month
Sun, Feb 28	Every weekend for three months
Sun, Aug 29	Every weekend for nine months

1000 hours outside, honestly

1000 hours a year is about 2.7 hours outside every day, or a little over 19 hours a week. It's a round target some people set themselves, often for their children, rather than a health guideline. For a lot of adults with

work, school runs and dark winter evenings, it's far more than a week allows, and a target you keep missing makes it easier to give up.

This plan aims at something you can keep: time outside every weekend. You start with one hour this weekend, then build to about two hours a week, the amount a large University of Exeter study linked with better health and wellbeing. After that, you keep it going: a month of weekends, three months, then nine.

If you want a bigger number, keep a tally. From week 4 if you start on "I'm rarely outside", or from week 1 if you start on "I get out sometimes", there's a two-minute job each Sunday: add the week's minutes outside to a running total. Two hours a week comes to about 100 hours a year. Five hours a week is about 260. To reach 1000, you'd need roughly 19 hours a week, which usually means weekday time too: before or after work, school pick-ups on foot, lunch outside, evenings in the garden. The tally shows you honestly where you are, and the weekend habit is the part that makes the rest possible.

How the plan works

One fixed time outside every weekend, on Saturday or Sunday, in your calendar. Anywhere green or blue counts: a park, a wood, a river, canal or beach, a garden, an allotment or community garden. You don't need to walk briskly or go far. Walking, sitting, pottering, playing and gardening all count.

Each week adds one thing. First the hour and the calendar, then a bag by the door and a backup slot, then new places close to home. After that you build towards two hours, find something to do out there, go out in weather you'd usually stay in for, learn the access rules, and try a longer outing, some growing, and the start or end of the day.

Why two hours? In a study of nearly 20,000 people in England, led by the University of Exeter, people who spent at least 120 minutes a week in nature were more likely to report good health and wellbeing than people who spent none. It didn't matter whether the two hours came in one visit or several. In that study, people with less than two hours a week didn't show the same difference, so this plan builds you up to two hours: the first hour is the start, not the end. Most of those visits were within two miles of home. It was a survey, so it shows a link rather than proving that the time outside caused the difference.

The milestones follow the board: an hour outside this weekend (day 7), every weekend for a month (day 28), for three months (day 91), and for nine months (about day 273). After the last week there are no new tasks: you keep your weekend time going.

Which level to pick

- I'm rarely outside: most weekends go by without an hour outdoors, apart from getting from place to place. 13 weeks, starting with one hour and reaching two hours a week in week 6.
- I get out sometimes: you spend time outside on some weekends, but not on a fixed day, or not when the weather turns. 8 weeks, starting with a fixed time and reaching two hours in week 2.

If you're not sure, pick the first level. It's easy to move on early.

If you want to walk for fitness, the Walk every day plan builds a daily brisk walk. If you want a summit, the Climb a mountain plan trains you for one. This plan is about time outside itself, at any pace.

Before you start

Spending time outside is low-risk for most people, but a few things are worth sorting first:

- If heat, cold or being on your feet affects a health condition you have, ask your GP or doctor what's sensible before you plan longer outings. Keep any medicines you need with you, such as an inhaler.
- Plan for the sun from spring to autumn. In the UK, the NHS says to spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm from March to October, and to protect your skin when the UV index is 3 or higher. You can burn even when it's cloudy.
- If the dark months bring low mood, getting outside in daylight helps, but it isn't always enough. Seasonal affective disorder is a type of depression that usually happens in winter, thought to be linked to less daylight. See a GP if you think you might have it, or if your mood is low most days whatever the season.

▪ For anywhere quieter or further away, tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back. Phone signal is patchy in many rural places.

Outdoors close to home

You don't need countryside. Most of the visits in the Exeter study were within two miles of home, and local urban green space counted.

▪ Green space: parks, playing fields, woods, nature reserves, commons, churchyards and cemeteries, tree-lined streets.

▪ Blue space: rivers, canals and towpaths, lakes and reservoirs, the coast. Being near water counts; you don't need to go in. At the coast, check the tide times so you aren't cut off.

▪ Gardens: your own, a friend's, a balcony with plants, an allotment.

▪ Community growing: community gardens, orchards and allotment groups often welcome volunteers with no experience, and give you a reason to be outside every weekend.

▪ Your doorstep: on the busiest weekends, coffee on the step or in the garden, or a slow wander round the block, still counts towards your hour.

A map is the quickest way to find places: look for green patches, blue lines and dotted footpaths within a short walk or bus ride.

Ideas by season and weather

Spring: listen for birdsong early in the morning, find blossom and bluebells, sow seeds in a pot or a community plot. Sun protection starts again in March in the UK.

Summer: go early or late, when it's cooler and quieter. Picnics, long light evenings, rivers and the coast. In the middle of the day, find shade.

Autumn: leaves, conkers, fungi (look, don't eat), misty mornings, the first frosts. Pack a warm layer, and plan for shorter afternoons.

Winter: go out in the middle of the day for the most daylight. Frosty walks, winter birds, early sunsets and the first stars before dinner. A shorter outing in winter still counts.

Dressing for it:

▪ Rain: a waterproof jacket with a hood, shoes that grip, and a dry layer in your bag. Choose paths rather than open hillside, and a shorter route.

▪ Cold: several thin layers rather than one thick one, because layers trap more body heat. Add a hat, gloves and warm socks, and keep moving if you start to feel chilly. You can still get sunburnt on clear, cold days.

▪ Heat: light, loose, light-coloured clothes, a hat, sunscreen and water. Go early or late, stay in the shade between 11am and 3pm, and keep the pace gentle.

▪ Wind and storms: in high winds, pick sheltered places away from cliff edges and big trees. Check the forecast before longer outings, and don't be afraid to turn back if it changes.

Access rights and the rules

In England and Wales, follow the Countryside Code. In short: respect everyone, protect the environment, enjoy the outdoors.

▪ Leave gates as you find them, and don't block gateways when you park.

▪ Stay on marked paths, even when they're muddy, unless you're on open access land.

▪ Take your litter home, and only have barbecues where signs say you can.

▪ Keep dogs under control and in sight. On open access land you must keep your dog on a lead between 1 March and 31 July, and around livestock at any time of year.

▪ Check the weather, and the tides at the coast, and tell someone where you're going.

Waymarks tell you who can use a path: a yellow arrow is a footpath for walkers and mobility aid users, a blue arrow is a bridleway, also for horse riders and cyclists. A brown sign with a walker on hills marks open access land, where you can leave the path.

In Scotland, you can go on to most land to enjoy the outdoors as long as you behave responsibly, and you must follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Its three principles are to respect the interests of others, care for the environment and take responsibility for your own actions. Access rights don't cover houses and gardens, other buildings and their yards, school grounds or places that charge for entry.

Elsewhere, rules differ, so check with your local park, council or national park service before you leave the path.

With children

A weekly park trip is a good fit for this plan. A University of Exeter study that followed children from birth to 11 found that those taken to parks and playgrounds at least once a week tended to have better mental health and social development than children who went less often. Parks are often free, which helps.

- Let them lead some of the time: puddles, sticks, climbing, digging. Children often slow the pace down, and that's fine.
- Give the outing a small mission: five different leaves, a bird you haven't seen, the biggest puddle.
- Dress them for the weather, with a spare layer and socks in your bag.
- Take extra care in the sun. Children's skin is more sensitive, and babies under 6 months should be kept out of direct strong sunlight.
- If you're aiming for a big yearly tally with them, count the after-school park, the walk to school and garden play too. Most of the hours come from ordinary days, not big trips.

If getting outside is harder for you

The Exeter study found the link between two hours a week in nature and better health held for people with long-term illnesses or disabilities too.

- Look for step-free places: towpaths, old railway lines turned into paths, promenades, park loops and many nature reserves have firm, level paths. In England and Wales, public footpaths and bridleways are open to people using mobility aids, but stiles, steps, kissing gates and narrow bridges can still block the way.
- Check before you go: many parks, reserves and national trails describe their paths, gradients, gates, toilets and parking online. If the information isn't there, phone and ask.
- Some sites lend all-terrain mobility scooters or wheelchairs. It's worth asking.
- Get help from people who know: in the UK, Disabled Ramblers is a national charity that organises countryside rambles for people with limited mobility and works to make the countryside more accessible, and the Sensory Trust works on accessible and sensory nature experiences, including for people living with dementia.
- Bring the outdoors closer: a seat in a garden, a balcony with plants, or a window seat in a park cafe on the worst days. Time outdoors doesn't need to be active to count in this plan.

What you need

- Your calendar, with your weekend time as a repeating event and a backup slot.
- A bag by the door: a waterproof, a warm layer, a hat, water, sunscreen in spring and summer, and a bag for rubbish.
- Shoes that grip on wet paths. Shoes you already own are fine.
- A map of what's near you, on paper or on your phone, to find new places.
- A tally, if you want one: a notebook, a note on your phone or a calendar where you write each week's minutes.

You don't need anything you'd pay for. Parks, footpaths and beaches are usually free.

Common mistakes

- Starting with a huge number. 1000 hours sounds good in January and feels hopeless by March. Start with an hour this weekend.
- No fixed time. "Some time this weekend" slides. A time in your calendar, with a backup slot, doesn't.
- Letting the weather decide. Have a wet-weather plan before the first wet weekend.
- Thinking it has to be wild or far. The park at the end of your road counts.
- Turning it into a workout. If you want fitness, add the Walk every day plan. This plan counts sitting on a bench too.
- Making up missed weekends. Don't try to do four hours next weekend to cover the one you missed. Just go at your usual time.
- Forgetting the sun in spring. You can burn in the UK from March, and on cloudy days.

Keeping it up to nine months

After the last week there are no new tasks. Keep three things going:

- Your weekend time, at the usual time, with the backup slot for weekends it won't work.
- Your list of places: three favourites, one for bad weather, and a new one to try each month.
- A look ahead each season. When the clocks change, move your time if you need to: midday in winter for the light, early or late in summer for the heat.

Nine months takes you through at least three seasons, which is when the habit stops depending on good weather. When the weekends start to feel the same, try something from the season ideas above. For a night outdoors, the Sleep under the stars plan is a good next step, and the A weekend offline plan pairs well with a longer outing. If you'd like a reason to look closely while you're out, try the Photo a day plan.

If you miss a weekend, go at your next usual time. Your count of weekends in a row starts again, but the places and the habit you've built are still there.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: Missed a weekend? Go out at your next usual time, for your usual length. You don't need to make up the time. If the weekend's already full, an hour on the backup day still counts.

Missed 2 weeks: Look at why. If it was the weather, pack the bag by the door and pick a wet-weather place. If plans took over, move your time to the day that's least busy. Then repeat the week you stopped on, at one hour.

Missed 3 weeks: Go out for an hour this weekend, somewhere close to home, and go back over week 2 of your level: put your weekend time back in your calendar as a repeating event, with a backup slot.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Start again at week 1 of "I'm rarely outside", with one hour. If low mood, especially in winter, is what's keeping you in, talk to your GP or doctor as well as getting out in daylight.

Sources

European Centre for Environment and Human Health, University of Exeter
`https://www.ecehh.org/news/2hr-nature-dose/`
“Research led by the University of Exeter’s European Centre for Environment and Human Health found that people who spend at least 120 minutes in nature a week are significantly more likely to report good health and higher psychological wellbeing than those who don’t visit nature at all during an average week.”

European Centre for Environment and Human Health, University of Exeter
`https://www.ecehh.org/news/2hr-nature-dose/`
“Published in Scientific Reports and funded by NIHR, the study used data from nearly 20,000 people in England and found that it didn’t matter whether the 120 minutes was achieved in a single visit or over several shorter visits.”

European Centre for Environment and Human Health, University of Exeter
`https://www.ecehh.org/news/2hr-nature-dose/`
“The majority of nature visits in this research took place within just two miles of home so even visiting local urban greenspaces seems to be a good thing.”

European Centre for Environment and Human Health, University of Exeter
`https://www.ecehh.org/news/parks-improve-child-mental-health/`
“Children who visit parks and playgrounds at least once a week may have better mental health and social development as they grow up.”

European Centre for Environment and Human Health, University of Exeter
`https://www.ecehh.org/news/parks-improve-child-mental-health/`
“This matters because parks are often free or low-cost spaces.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/`
“Spend time in the shade when the sun is strongest. In the UK, this is between 11am and 3pm from March to October.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/`
“You can also check the UV index on a weather app or website. If it's 3 or higher, consider protecting your skin.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/`
“Children aged under 6 months should be kept out of direct strong sunlight.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/overview/`
“Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that usually happens in the winter.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/overview/`
“It’s not known exactly what causes seasonal affective disorder (SAD), but it’s thought to be linked to reduced levels of daylight in winter.”

Natural England and Natural Resources Wales
`https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors`
“Stay on marked paths, even if they’re muddy, unless wider access is available, such as on open access land.”

Natural England and Natural Resources Wales
`https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors`
“Between 1 March and 31 July, you must have your dog on a lead on Open Access land, even if there is no livestock on the land.”

Natural England and Natural Resources Wales
`https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-`

for-countryside-visitors
“Tell someone else where you are going and when you expect to be back.”

NatureScot
https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/act-and-access-code/scottish-outdoor-access-code-visitors-and-land-managers/what-scottish-outdoor-access-code
“In Scotland, you can go on to most land to enjoy the outdoors – as long as you behave responsibly.”

NatureScot
https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/act-and-access-code/scottish-outdoor-access-code-visitors-and-land-managers/what-scottish-outdoor-access-code
“There are also some common-sense exceptions, including houses and gardens, other buildings and their yards or compounds, school grounds and places which charge for entry.”

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust
https://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/our-blog/opinion-and-advocacy/how-can-a-disabled-person-access-the-countryside/
“Disabled Ramblers is a National Charity that helps disabled people access the countryside, and works to make the countryside more accessible.”

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust
https://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/our-blog/opinion-and-advocacy/how-can-a-disabled-person-access-the-countryside/
“In theory disabled people on wheeled aids are allowed to go on footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths.”

Walk Wheel Cycle Trust
https://www.walkwheelcycletrust.org.uk/our-blog/opinion-and-advocacy/how-can-a-disabled-person-access-the-countryside/
“Stiles, steps, kissing gates, narrow bridges, adverse camber, and so on will pass unnoticed to many people walking and cycling.”

Better Health Channel, Victoria State Government
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/exercise-safety
“Multiple layers of clothing trap more body heat than one bulky layer.”

Better Health Channel, Victoria State Government
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/exercise-safety
“Don’t forget sun protection – it is possible to be sunburnt even in cold weather, especially at high altitudes or on clear days.”

Better Health Channel, Victoria State Government
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/exercise-safety
“Wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose-fitting clothes.”

This plan online	https://goaltodo.com/spend-time-outdoors
Reach it with others on Welang	https://welang.com/goals/spend-time-outdoors
Reach it on your own in HourLife	https://www.hourlife.com

This plan is a guide, not medical advice. See a doctor before starting if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or haven't exercised in a long time.