

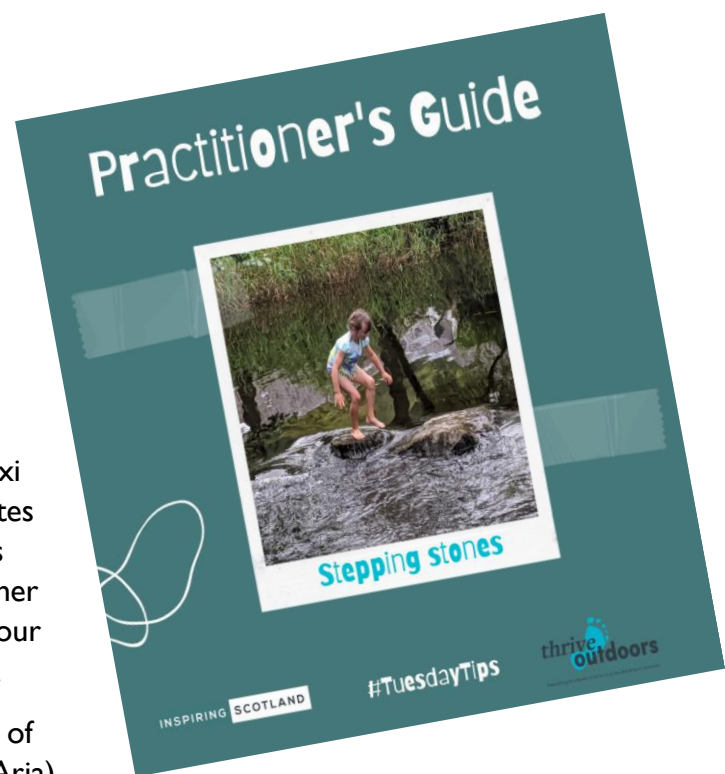
A Practitioner's Guide  
to  
OUTDOOR PLAY BASED LEARNING  
**Flexi-Schooling fun!**  
Guest Blogger: Gemma Craigie-Sharland  
& daughter Aria

## So what exactly is flexi-schooling?

A friend of my sister in law, who lives in Surrey, lives near me and by happy accident we met in 2016. She told me she flexi-schools her daughter and although our own daughter was only 3 at the time a decision was made that day.

**Flexi school is where children attend school and are home schooled in conjunction.** We do the home school part one day a week but we know others who do 2 or 3 days. The Scottish Government acknowledges flexi schooling in it's home education guidance and notes that consideration must be given to requests. It is however the decision of the local authority whether to grant these. We live in Fife and are lucky that our local authority are open to flexible arrangements.

Before I write anymore about this from my point of view, here it is fae the bairn hirsle (my daughter Aria)



## What do you love about flexi Friday?

**Aria: I love it because I get to be outside much much more than being at school.**

I get to have fun with different friends and be with my family. It's better because we can make our own decisions about what we want to do and I'm not getting told what to do all day like at school.

## Why do you like being outside?

**Aria:** It makes me feel really happy and I feel like it's better for the environment instead of building more and more things. I like being in the fresh air because it makes me feel happy about myself and what I've done in the week, I feel like I could fly.

## What are some of your favourite flexi Friday memories?

**Aria:** Going to Monimail and finding llamas and a big huge tree house. There's a big tower we climb up and it's got some history written in it and we get to write in a book when we've been there. There is an apple press, it's very cool cause we can put different stuff in it and squash it. There's tree swings in the woods and chickens and lots of apple trees. There's a fire pit with tree trunks to sit on, one of them is bigger and it's the king's seat and Axel (little brother) always sits on it. We cooked apples and marshmallows on sticks in the fire.

When we went to Ravenscraig Park and we went down to the beach. Everybody decided to swim and me and Skye just went in our pants. It was really really cold but I didn't really mind because I love the sea so much. We buried each other and made each other into mermaids by making a tail out of sand and we put shells and seaweed on our hair. There's a really good park there. I like the monkey bars and I once did them ten times in a row and I also managed to do the really hard climbing wall. There is a ruined castle and we pretend to be the king and queen.

When we went to Kinghorn on the train and did a number and letter hunt and I got to take pictures on Mummy's phone. Then we cycled home and that was the furthest I had EVER gone on my bike! I didn't give up on the hills and I was proud of myself.

**Back to me (Gemma). I could talk all day on the many different reasons we decided to flexi and how positive it has been for us.**



## Being outdoors is great for #families! Why we love flexi-schooling...



**We want our children to know that they don't have to follow social norms.** You don't have to go to school 5 days a week to get an education, learning is everywhere, flexi-schooling is our way of living that we value.

My husband and I both have a background in sports coaching and outdoor education. We've seen first hand how being outside increases curiosity, stimulates imagination and improves team work. Having an additional day in the week to do these things and not having to cram it into the weekends is perfect for us.

We also feel 4 days at school and 3 with family is a better balance than 5/2. Having Fridays together has been great for the sibling relationship and when the schools closed in

lockdown this made the transition slightly easier since they are used to playing together for a whole day at a time. Someone once said to me that your sibling relationships are the most enduring in life and you can understand one another like no one else ever could. Making sure that sibling bond was cemented very early was one of our reasons for choosing to flexi.

## Making flexi-school work for busy schedules!

Many children today have very busy schedules. We all want to give our children all the opportunities we can but sometimes that can make for a very stressful life for parents and children. Aria is a member of swimming club and does Highland dancing. Both of these are very important, particularly the Highland dancing since it is exposure to her culture (something else I could gab on about!). Having our Friday 'off' gives balance to the schedule. It is a relaxed day with no time constraints and although there is always a plan we don't always follow it.

We are part of an informal network of flexi school and home educating families and we often meet on Fridays. The children in this group range from babies in slings to teenagers. Children in school, and in other activities, tend to be split into age groups. This opportunity to play with children of all different ages has made a real difference to Aria's experiences and outlook.

## Flexi-schooling doesn't just benefit children but parents too!

### It has been good for me as an individual too.

I'm a self confessed cald tattie and although I absolutely love being outside, without the commitment to flexi you'd be unlikely to find me sitting on a beach in the rain. But some of my best memories are in bad weather, like the day we went swimming in the sea and a huge rainstorm came out of nowhere. Or the time we spent most of the day on the chutes in the park because the rain was making them super slidy. It also gives me a day off from the boring part of being an adult. All the little bits and bobs that need to be done to keep a house – I don't do any of that on a Friday! The most important thing it's done for me is re-affirm my confidence that I can take an active role in my children's education – that they will be ready for life in the big wide world because of what I have given than and not just what they've learned in a classroom.

Although the numbers of flexi-schooled children in Scotland is rising they are still low. I think I am probably very annoying because I will manage to work flexi-school into conversation with everyone I meet. I have had negative comments from other parents, like 'you are denying your child a fifth of their education' and 'you are taking her away from her friends'. Of course it doesn't suit everyone but I would like parents to know it is an option if it's something they, and their children, want to do, so I'll carry on telling everyone about it.

**Enjoy this blog? Do you have top tips that you would like to share?**

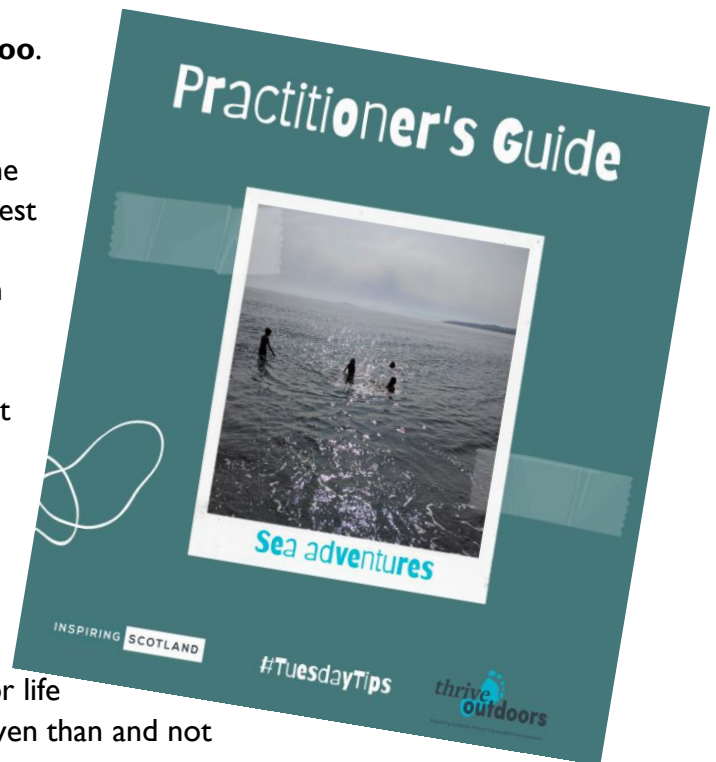
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### Useful Links

**Resource on Flexi-schooling** :<http://parentingsciencegang.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/PSG-Flexischooling-in-Scotland-research-final-report.pdf>

**Our handy hints and tips on #outdoorplay for parents and carers:**

<https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/thrive/>