



# Top tips for playing in the dark



## Playing in the dark can feel particularly exciting and magical.

Familiar places like your garden or local park feel different in the dark. Playing outside in the dark is a way your child can experience the world, helping them to understand day and night and the changing seasons.



## More time to play

Playing after dark gives your child more time for play. In winter there are fewer hours of daylight, so finding ways of helping your child continue to play after dark is a good way of giving them more play time.

## Playing in the dark feels different

After dark the world looks and feels different. Games you play in daylight like hide and seek become more exciting and thrilling. Taking a walk becomes an adventure. Sitting together to tell stories feels cosy. Lanterns, campfires, moonlight and candlelight can make the dark feel special.

## Magic and traditions

In the winter months, there are lots of festivals like Halloween. The winter solstice in December is the shortest day and the longest night of the year.

In the long winter nights, it's easy to see why people's imaginations are drawn to ghosts, witches and magical creatures. Books and films are full of these kinds of characters.

## Stargazing

If you stop to look up at the sky in the evening and at night you can see the setting sun, the stars, the moon, and even shooting stars if you are lucky. Library books or smartphone apps can help you identify groups of stars. Stargazing activities give children a sense of how amazing our world is.



## Time to shine

Some things can only be played in the dark. Try giving children things that glow and shine to play with in the dark – for example, torches or flashlights, glow sticks, glow-in-the-dark stars and glow-in-the-dark paint. You can make magical dens and mark out paths with fairy lights and battery-powered 'candles'.



## Games to play in the dark

You can play all sorts of games in the dark:

- tag, chasey or hide-and-seek using the beam of a torch to catch the other players
- making strange shadow shapes with torches – try hanging up a white sheet and making shadows on it.

## Staying safe in the dark

When you're thinking about making sure your child is safe playing in the dark, the questions you will ask are very similar to the questions you'd ask in the day:

- How old is your child?
- What level of supervision do they need?
- Where are they going to play?
- How far are they allowed to go from home?
- Who are they with?

You might want your child to wear a reflective jacket or reflective strips on their clothes.

You know your own child best, so you are the best judge of the level of independence they can manage.

For more ideas, visit our website:  
[www.playfulchildhoods.wales](http://www.playfulchildhoods.wales)

