



Overall, studies of adventure learning interventions consistently show positive benefits on academic learning

Cost

£££££

Evidence strength



Impact (months)

+4

Effect size

0.31

What is it?

Outdoor adventure learning typically involves outdoor experiences, such as climbing or mountaineering; survival, ropes or assault courses; or outdoor sports, such as orienteering, sailing and canoeing. These can be organised as intensive residential courses or shorter courses run in schools or local outdoor centres.

Adventure education usually involves [collaborative learning experiences](#) with a high level of physical (and often emotional) challenge. Practical problem-solving, explicit reflection and discussion of thinking and emotion (see also [Metacognition and self-regulation](#)) may also be involved.

Adventure learning interventions typically do not include a formal academic component, so this summary does not include forest schools or field trips.

How effective is it?

Overall, studies of adventure learning interventions consistently show positive benefits on academic learning. On average, pupils who participate in adventure learning interventions make approximately four additional months' progress. There is also evidence of an impact on non-cognitive outcomes such as self-confidence.

The evidence suggests that the impact is greater for more vulnerable students and older learners (teenagers), longer courses (more than a week), and those in a 'wilderness' setting, though other types of intervention still show some positive impacts.

Understanding why adventure learning interventions appear to improve academic outcomes is not straightforward. One assumption might be that non-cognitive skills such as perseverance and resilience are developed through adventure learning and that these skills have a knock-on impact on academic outcomes. If adventure learning interventions are effective because of their impact on non-cognitive skills, then explicitly encouraging students to actively apply these skills in the classroom is likely to increase effectiveness. However, it should be noted that the wider evidence base on the relationship between these non-cognitive skills and pupil achievement is underdeveloped.

Evidence of outdoor adventure learning in the Arab world is scarce and limited to teacher's views and perceptions. Studies in, Jordan, Oman, and United Arab Emirates reported that teachers perceived benefits of outdoor learning for students' active and experiential learning and their social skills and attitudes towards the subject.

However, researchers have highlighted some potential barriers for teachers to use outdoor adventure learning as a teaching approach mainly due to the extreme environmental and weather conditions as in most of the Gulf region. Furthermore, shortage of resources, teachers' workload, and lack of administration support were identified as additional obstacles.

To date, research in outdoor adventure learning is limited in this region despite the reported benefits. More research is needed in this area that could examine the types of outdoor activities which would best fit with the culture, weather, and education systems in the Arab world. Further studies on improving outdoor activities in schools could include educational authorities, principals, teachers, and parents.

How secure is the evidence?

The evidence on adventure learning interventions is moderately secure. The range of effect sizes is fairly wide but all the studies included in the meta-analysis show a positive effect.

What are the costs?

Costs vary, with a six-day adventure sailing experience costing about 600.0 GBP (771.8 USD, 547.2 JOD) and a seven-day outdoor adventure course about 550.0 GBP (707.5 USD, 501.6 JOD) per pupil. An adventure ropes course costs about 30.0 GBP (38.6 USD, 27.4 JOD) for half a day. Overall, costs are estimated at about 500.0 GBP (643.2 USD, 456.0 JOD) per pupil per year and therefore as moderate.

Costs originally calculated in GBP; USD and JOD calculated via oanda.com on 22/09/20.

As yet there is no information about local costs.

What should I consider?

A wide range of adventure activities are linked with increased academic achievement.

Experiences that last over a week tend to have greater impact and tend to produce effects of a longer duration.

It is important to work with well-trained and well-qualified staff as adventure experiences can pose very different physical and emotional risks to those experienced in schools.

Outdoor adventure experiences could have positive impacts on self-confidence, self-efficacy and motivation. How will you maximise the impact on learning by ensuring pupils apply these skills when they return to the classroom?

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