

PROJECT: HIKE TO THE BROCKEN

From Personal Experience to an Educational Field Trip

English for Early Childhood Educators

Class: 21 students

Groups: 7 groups of 3 students

1. The Project Idea

Your class will actually hike to the **Brocken**.

The hike is not only a class excursion. It is also the **fieldwork phase of your project**.

As future educators, your task is to experience the hike from two different perspectives:

Perspective 1 – You as hikers

What do you notice?

What is difficult?

What is interesting?

What is beautiful?

What is dangerous?

What would you need?

Perspective 2 – You as educators

What would this experience be like for children?

Your final task is to use your real experience to design an **age-appropriate educational Brocken excursion for children**.

The project therefore follows this sequence:

EXPERIENCE → OBSERVE → ANALYSE → PLAN → IMPLEMENT → EVALUATE

2. Project Objectives

By completing this project, students will:

- experience an outdoor activity from an educator's perspective;
- identify potential hazards through direct observation;
- conduct a realistic pre-trip risk assessment;
- identify educational opportunities along the route;
- develop age-appropriate outdoor activities;
- practise professional English vocabulary;
- communicate with children, parents and colleagues;
- develop emergency and contingency plans;
- simulate the implementation of the excursion;
- evaluate both the real hike and the planned children's excursion.

PHASE 1 – THE REAL BROCKEN HIKE

3. Fieldwork: “Observe Like an Educator”

During the actual hike, each group is responsible for observing a particular aspect of the experience. Do not simply walk to the summit.

Your group is conducting field research.

Each group should take notes, photographs where appropriate, and record observations that could later be used in the children's excursion plan.

4. Fieldwork Teams

GROUP 1 – ROUTE & ACCESSIBILITY

Members: _____, _____, _____

Observe:

- starting point;
- trail conditions;
- steep sections;
- distance;
- estimated walking times;
- possible rest areas;
- viewpoints;
- toilets;
- places where the group could stop;
- difficult sections;
- alternative routes.

Ask:

Could young children manage this section?

Where would we need a break?

Where could the group safely stop?

Which sections would need special supervision?

GROUP 2 – SAFETY & RISK ASSESSMENT

Members: _____, _____, _____

This group conducts the **preliminary risk assessment**.

Look for:

- steep slopes;
- slippery surfaces;
- loose stones;
- roots;
- narrow paths;
- traffic / bicycles;
- weather exposure;
- cold;
- wind;
- rain;
- fatigue;
- dehydration;
- getting lost;
- separation from the group.

For every significant risk, record:

Hazard → Who could be affected? → Possible consequence → Risk level → Preventive measure

Example:

Hazard: slippery stones

Who: children and educators

Consequence: falling / injury

Risk level: medium

Preventive measure: appropriate footwear, walking slowly, adult supervision

The actual hike should provide **evidence** for the final risk assessment.

GROUP 3 – NATURE & SCIENCE

Members: _____, _____, _____

Look for things children could investigate.

For example:

- trees;
- moss;
- rocks;
- insects;
- birds;
- animal tracks;
- fungi;
- different habitats;
- weather;
- clouds;
- altitude;
- seasonal changes.

Record at least **five potential learning opportunities**.

For each one, ask:

What could a child observe?

What could the child ask?

What could the educator explain?

Could this become an activity or game?

GROUP 4 – CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Members: _____, _____, _____

During the hike, identify places where children could do something.

Look for opportunities for:

- scavenger hunts;
- observation games;
- counting;
- collecting natural objects where permitted;
- drawing;
- listening activities;
- “I spy”;
- sensory activities;
- storytelling;
- nature photography;
- simple experiments.

Record the **location + activity + learning objective**.

Example:

Location	Activity	Learning objective
Forest section	Tree detective	Identify different trees
Viewpoint	What can you see?	Observation and vocabulary
Rest area	Listening game	Develop sensory awareness
Summit area	Weather observation	Understand weather and landscape

GROUP 5 – WEATHER, CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

Members: _____, _____, _____

Observe the conditions during the actual hike.

Record:

- temperature;
- wind;
- rain/snow;
- sunshine;
- ground conditions;
- clothing required;
- footwear;
- food and drinks;
- backpacks;
- emergency equipment.

Then ask:

What would children need that adults might not?

What could easily go wrong?

What should parents be told before the trip?

GROUP 6 – GROUP MANAGEMENT & CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

Members: _____, _____, _____

Observe the hike from the perspective of managing a group of children.

Think about:

- pace;
- tiredness;
- motivation;
- attention span;
- boredom;
- excitement;
- disagreements;
- children walking ahead;
- children falling behind;
- children needing encouragement.

Discuss:

How could an educator keep children motivated?

How often would children need breaks?

How could the educator make walking itself part of the learning experience?

GROUP 7 – DOCUMENTATION & REFLECTION

Members: _____, _____, _____

Document the experience.

Collect:

- photographs;
- interesting observations;
- memorable moments;
- unexpected problems;
- interesting places;
- possible children's questions;
- examples of useful English vocabulary.

*After the hike, prepare a short “**What we learned from the real hike**” presentation.*

5. The Fieldwork Log

Student: _____

Every student should keep a short individual fieldwork log.

During the hike, complete sentences such as:

I noticed...

I was surprised by...

I found this difficult because...

A child might find this difficult because...

A child might be interested in...

This could become an educational activity because...

One potential safety problem is...

An educator should...

Points: _____ / 10

PHASE 2 – FROM EXPERIENCE TO PLANNING

6. The Post-Hike Planning Meeting

After the hike, the seven groups meet and compare their observations.

Each group presents:

“What did we discover?”

The class then asks:

What would we have to change if we took young children with us?

This is the crucial transition from:

HIKING EXPERIENCE

to

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

7. The Final Educational Excursion

The class now designs a hypothetical children's excursion based on the real hike.

The plan should answer:

WHO?

What age group?

WHY?

What are the educational objectives?

WHERE?

Which route / sections?

WHEN?

What season? What time of day?

HOW?

Walking, transport, breaks, activities?

WHAT?

What equipment is required?

WHAT IF?

What happens if something goes wrong?

8. Adapt the Real Hike for Children

Students must explicitly identify differences between:

Adult hike

and

Children's excursion

For example:

Adult hike	Children's excursion
Longer walking stages	Shorter stages
Fewer breaks	Frequent breaks
Adult-sized equipment	Child-appropriate equipment
Adult pace	Child-friendly pace
Independent decisions	Close supervision
Physical challenge	Educational experience
Adult risk awareness	Explicit safety instruction

Students should identify at least **five adaptations**.

PHASE 3 – GROUP PROJECT

The original seven groups now develop their respective sections of the children's excursion.

Group 1 – Route & Timetable

Develop the child-friendly route and schedule.

Group 2 – Safety & Risk Assessment

Transform the field observations into a professional risk assessment.

Group 3 – Educational Activities

Develop 3–5 activities based on things actually observed on the hike.

Group 4 – Equipment, Food & Clothing

Prepare a complete checklist for children and educators.

Group 5 – Parents & Communication

Prepare a parent information sheet and parent–educator dialogue.

Group 6 – Children's Preparation & Implementation

Prepare the children before the trip and demonstrate how educators communicate during the excursion.

Group 7 – Evaluation

Develop the children's, parents' and educators' evaluation procedures.

9. “Evidence from the Hike”

An important requirement:

Each group must use **at least three observations from the actual Brocken hike** in its final project.

Students should use expressions such as:

“During our hike, we noticed that...”

“We discovered that...”

“This section of the trail would be difficult for young children because...”

“We found an excellent place for...”

“Our experience showed us that...”

“Based on our observations, we would recommend...”

This prevents the project from becoming a purely theoretical exercise.

10. Implementation Simulation

The groups now simulate the children's excursion.

The classroom becomes the **Brocken hiking group**.

Students demonstrate:

- welcoming the children;
- taking attendance;
- explaining safety rules;
- starting the hike;
- giving instructions;
- conducting an activity;
- taking a break;
- dealing with tired children;
- responding to a problem;
- concluding the excursion.

All communication should be in English.

11. The Unexpected Event

During the simulation, the teacher introduces one unexpected event.

Examples:

Situation A

A child says:

“I can't walk any further.”

Situation B

It starts raining.

Situation C

A child slips and has a minor injury.

Situation D

A child is missing from the group.

Situation E

The group is running significantly behind schedule.

Situation F

A child has forgotten their water bottle.

Situation G

Weather conditions become unsuitable for continuing.

The students must demonstrate an appropriate response.

12. Final Presentation

Each group has **5–7 minutes**.

Every presentation should contain:

1. **What we observed on the actual hike**
2. **What this means for children**
3. **Our proposed solution**
4. **How we would implement it**
5. **What we would evaluate**

The seven presentations together should form **one complete children's Brocken excursion**.

13. ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

“HIKE TO THE BROCKEN” – GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Date: _____

Class: _____

Teacher: _____

Groups

	G1 Route	G2 Safety	G3 Activities	G4 Equipment	G5 Parents	G6 Implementation	G7 Evaluation
1. Content & task fulfillment /5							
2. Use of real hike experience /5							
3. Educational value & child focus /5							
4. Practicality & feasibility /5							
5. Safety & responsibility /5							
6. English language & vocabulary /5							
7. Presentation & communication /5							
8. Teamwork & participation /5							
TOTAL /40							

40 - 38	37 - 30	29 - 24	23 - 16	15 - 8	7 - 0
1	2	3	4	5	6

50 - 47	46 38	37 - 30	29 - 20	19 -10	9 - 0
1	2	3	4	5	6

14. Individual Reflection

After completing the project, each student writes **150–200 words**.

Reflection: “From Hiker to Educator”

Answer the following:

1. What did I learn from the actual Brocken hike?
 2. What did I notice that I would not have noticed before this project?
 3. Which aspects of the hike would be difficult for young children?
 4. What would I have to change?
 5. What did I learn about risk assessment?
 6. What educational opportunities did I discover?
 7. What did I personally contribute to the project?
 8. What would I do differently next time?
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15. Final Discussion

Finish the project with the question:

“Would you take young children on a hike to the Brocken? Why or why not?”

Students must support their opinion with evidence from the actual hike.

Possible discussion points:

- age of the children;
 - physical demands;
 - weather;
 - safety;
 - educational benefits;
 - preparation;
 - staffing;
 - alternative routes;
 - emergency planning;
 - children's interests;
 - enjoyment and motivation.
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THE CENTRAL IDEA

The most important principle of the project is:

“Experience it first. Analyse it as an educator. Then plan it for children.”

The real hike is therefore not an interruption to the project — **it is the research on which the project is based.**