

PACEMAT

We don't usually summon insects to our picnics but they have a habit of inviting themselves. With bee populations dwindling across the world, perhaps its time we were a bit more inclusive and welcoming. Our fun facts and bee-themed games below will help the whole family to learn more about bees, at the same time as running off some of that cake!

UP TO 11 YEARS OLD

We Need Bees

Fun fact: If the bees and other insects didn't pollinate our plants, we would have to get used to life without all kinds of food. Including chips!

Game: Busy bees

In this version of tag, all the players pretend to be bees by buzzing as they run around. The 'Busy Bee' can only tag the other bees by touching their arms or legs (like bees collecting pollen).



Bee bedtime

Fun fact: Just like us bees need to get between five and eight hours of sleep a day.

Game: Sleeping bees

Choose one queen bee. All the other bees have to lie down and pretend to be asleep. It is the queen bee's job to try and wake them up. She can do this in any way she likes but she can't touch them. If she sees a bee moving, the queen bee can tap them. These bees then buzz three times, stand up, do a waggle dance, and then help the queen bee to wake up the other bees.

Pollen Collection

Fun fact: Bees have special brushes on their front legs to help them collect any pollen that has gathered on their heads.

Game: Pass the pollen

Spread out some items to represent pollen in a large circle (one for each player). This could be stones, balls, or even boiled eggs! The players are the bees. They stand in the middle of the circle, taking it in turns to flap their wings over to an item, and pick it up. With the item in their hand, they flap back to the next bee, and do a waggle dance to show them where the next piece of pollen is. Once all the bees have some pollen, the whole colony buzzes over to the hive (picnic blanket) to deposit it, and receive a reward.



Super Bees

Fun fact: Did you know that bees have a super power? They can see things faster than any other creature in the world.

Game: Blindfolded bees

Choose one player at a time to be the worker bee. Blindfold this bee then quietly place something tasty to represent pollen a short distance away. Instruct the worker bee to spin round three times. The other bees then have to give helpful verbal instructions until the worker bees finds find the pollen.



Which Bee?

Fun fact: One way to identify a bee is to look at its bottom. White-tailed bumble bees have white bottoms, red-tailed bumble bees have orange bottoms, and some carpenter bees have black shiny bottoms.

Game: The bee's bottom

Sit the group down in a circle with one person (the bee) in the middle. The aim of the game is to make the bee laugh. The other players take it in turns to ask questions but the bee can only answer with the words, 'The bee's bottom'. When someone finally makes the bee laugh, they swap places and become the bee themselves.

11 YEARS OLD AND OLDER

Waggle Dance

Fun fact: When a worker honey bee gets back to the hive, it performs a waggle dance to tell the other bees where to find food.

Game: Hum, waggle, buzz

For this game you will need to secretly allocate bee roles. One person will be the queen bee the others will be workers. All the bees walk around the picnic mat, and hum until the queen bee swaps to either wagging or buzzing. As soon as the worker bees notice someone changing activity, they have to do the same. Once everyone has hummed, waggled and buzzed, the worker bees have to guess who the queen bee



All the Bees

Fun fact: Not all bees like to party. There are over 240 species of solitary bee in the UK.

Game: Which bee am I?

This game depends on the players remembering a few facts about bees (see below). When the caller says the name of a bee, the players have to swap actions to match the behaviour of that bee. The last player to swap is out.

Carder Bees - have long tongues (stick your tongue out)

Tawny mining bees - nest underground (pretend to dig)

Bumble bees - are really friendly and sociable (hold hands)

Red mason bees - collect pollen all over their bodies (brush yourself down)

Honey bees - can fly up to six miles (pretend to fly)

Leafcutter bees - build cell nests in leaves (scissor fingers)

Team Work

Fun fact: Most bees are really cooperative. The workers collect food and protect everybody else in the hive by stinging intruders.

Game: Tell the truth

For this game you will need to prepare a card for each player with a fun bee fact on it (fact ideas below). Players keep their facts secret then take it in turns to talk for two minutes about bees. During this talk they have to tell two made up lies about bees, as well as their fun fact. The other players have to guess which are true and which are lies.

1 in 3 mouthfuls of food are dependent on insect pollination

Bees have four wings that hook together in pairs when they are flying

One beehive can make 24 jars of honey in a season

Some bees don't make any honey at all

Two UK bumble bee species are already known to be extinct

B-lines are insect pathways planted by people to link wildlife areas together



To Bee or Not to Bee

(Not so) fun fact: Bee numbers are falling across Britain.

35 of our bee species are under threat of extinction.

Game: Missing bees

Life would be rubbish without bees. And so would the English language. Take it in turns to read the information below out loud, following some or all of the instructions below.

Every time a word begins with the letter 'b' say 'buzz' instead.

Every time the letter 'b' appears in the middle of a word hum instead.

Every time the letters 'b', 'e', and 'e' appear together in a word do a waggle dance.

Some people are scared of bees but these fuzzy bottomed beauties are really our best buddies. They don't spin webs like spiders or build nests in bushes like birds but without bees, we would have a problem with our food supply. Imagine a world without bread, beans or cabbages! We need to remember that plants need pollen to make seeds, and we need bees to bring that pollen to the plants!

Bee-Hive Yourself

Fun fact: Bumble bees have lots of predators.

These include badgers, spiders and wasps.

Robins sometimes catch bees then rub them on branches to remove their stings.

Game: Hive

One person throws a ball high into the air at the same time as shouting someone else's name. The player whose name was called has to catch the ball then shout 'HIVE'. The other players run away as soon as the ball is thrown, stopping only when they hear 'HIVE'. The person with the ball then throws it at someone else. If the ball makes contact, the person it hits gets the letter 'H'. The game carries on and further letters are allocated. The loser is the first player to get all the letters to make up 'HIVE'.

