

## Forest Chocolate.

My sons love anything to do with survival. I have often seen them playing in the garden, pretending(1) to be lost in a forest. They act out a story(2) of being three brothers, helping each other to survive by building a cabin, finding water, catching fish, and making tools. Usually, in my garden, they only get as far as(3) digging a big hole in my vegetable area, and propping up(4) odd bits of(5) wood in it for the cabin walls. By the time they do that(6), they're hungry, so they come into the house to eat, and forget about any more surviving. Their half-made cabin usually falls over, and I clean up the mess. But, I understand their excitement about survival. It would be a challenge, and adventure. It would even be a little scary, but they would have each other. It would be very different to their real lives. Thankfully, we have a big back garden. It is mainly grass, so the kids can run around and play. However, we do have a fire pit. It's a circular area that my husband built: he brought in(7) extra earth and rocks to make a slight hill. Then he planted all sorts of trees and bushes on the hill. Right inside, at ground level(8), is a flat, grassy area with rock walls all around, and a rock fire pit right in the center. Now that the plants and trees have really grown, it is like a mini forest. Robert was in a survival mood(9) the other day, and persuaded me to help him make a little fire and heat up some hot chocolate. He chose not to(10) use the fire pit, but to make his own very small fire on the hill. We found small, dry twigs, moss, and pine cones for the fire, and we put rocks all around in a circle. Robert was the chef. He mixed the water and hot chocolate powder, and tasted it a few times until it was sweet enough and hot enough. And, you know, it was an adventure. We were out in our mini forest, surrounded by trees, surviving for just a few minutes.

1. 'To pretend' is a verb which means 'to act as if'. Children do it all the time when they play, and sometimes adults do too.

a. He pretended to be Darth Vader, and his sister pretended to be Luke Skywalker.

b. She'll make a great actor one day; she's very good at pretending.

2. 'To act out' is the verb used 'to perform'. It is followed by the noun, or the scene or play that is performed. It has a second meaning as well. It can mean to behave disruptively. This second sense can be expressed as 'to act out' or 'to act up'.

a. The students acted out the play they had written; it was very good.

b. The class was really acting out/up; they weren't listening, and they were hard to control.

3. 'To get as far as' means 'to accomplish' or 'to achieve' but not enough, or not totally. It has a sense of measuring how much was done, but knowing that it the job wasn't completed. It is often preceded by 'only'.

a. He wrote for two hours, but only got as far as the middle of his essay.

b. I bought the book that you recommended, but I have only got as far as page 28.

c. We visited the art gallery, but we only saw as far as the second floor.

4. 'To prop up' is like saying 'to lean something up'. The item that is propped is not securely fixed.

a. The tree branches were propped up with wooden poles because they were so heavy with fruit.

b. I don't have time to fix the table legs; I'll prop it up now, and fix it tomorrow.

5. 'Odd bits of' is similar to the expression 'bits and pieces'.

a. My daughter found odd bits of string, and made a pretty collage.

**b. My dad made a path of odd bits of broken pots.**

**6. 'By the time....' is similar in meaning to 'when' but it indicates that time has been spent, or has gone by before something has been achieved. It can be used with any tense.**

**a. By the time we arrived, the party had finished.**

**b. By the time you hurry up, you will have missed the train.**

**c. You need to stop talking because by the time you eat your soup, it will be cold!**

**7. When there is building or construction of some kind going on, often we use the phrase 'to bring in' when talking about equipment or machinery; we don't just say 'to bring' or 'brought'.**

**a. The workmen brought in a bulldozer to make the land flat. Later they brought in a crane to put the roof on the house.**

**b. To build our fire pit, we brought in lots of rock and soil.**

**8. 'Ground level' is easy to understand; it's the level of the land.**

**a. The restaurant is at ground level, near the reception area.**

**b. Let's park the car at ground level, and then take the elevator to the shopping area.**

**9. 'To be in a .... mood' is a useful phrase. Notice that an adjective or a noun can go before 'mood'.**

**a. I'm in a coffee mood; I haven't had a good coffee for ages.**

**b. They're in a party mood; they've finished their studies, and they want to celebrate.**

**c. He's in a cozy mood; it's snowing outside, and he wants to stay by the fire and read.**

**10. 'He chose not to use the fire pit' has an important and flexible format. You could say 'He chose to not use the fire pit'. The sentences are interchangeable. Both are more specific than 'He didn't choose to use the fire pit.' They are deliberately rejecting the fire pit. The choice is 'to not use the fire pit'.**

**a. I chose to not take my iPhone; I didn't want to lose it.**

**b. She chose not to wear her engagement ring; she didn't want anyone to know about it.**

**c. They chose not to drive; flying would be safer.**

**d. We chose to not stay in that hotel because of its bad reviews.**

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