



2026 Being a Freelance Forest School Leader or Assistant

At a Glance

What is a freelance Forest School Leader?	The Benefits	Key Information about Tax
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What is a Freelance Forest School Leader/Assistant?

"A freelance Forest School leader/assistant is a self-employed educator who designs and delivers outdoor learning experiences. They are responsible for planning, preparing, and facilitating sessions that promote exploration, play, and skill development in a natural environment. Freelance leaders and assistants work on a contract basis, often for multiple schools, organizations, or individuals, rather than being directly employed by a single institution."

As a freelance Forest School Leader/assistant you will be hired by Canopy Forest School to run Forest School sessions. As a contractor you have control over how, and when you work and you also can negotiate your wages with us and together we will create a client/contractor agreement contract which will have a 1 month notice period. The contract we negotiate together will outline the regular hours that you have agreed to work.

As a sole trader you will need to pay income tax on your profits and you must be registered with HMRC and fill out tax returns from the outset. Sole traders make all of their own business decisions and can keep all of the profit after paying tax. Self-employed or freelance workers are not paid through PAYE, and you do not have the rights and responsibilities of an employee. Instead you will invoice Canopy Forest School each month instead of getting a wage.

At Canopy Forest School we have our own “Freelance Handbook” which outlines our company culture, values, ethos and mission as well as a “Handbook of Policies and Procedures”. We will expect you to follow these principles and procedures as you are contracted through us and as your client if you have any concerns, worries or need to raise a work problem Canopy Forest School will directly deal with these.

The Benefits

Flexibility:

- Freelance Forest School leaders/assistants have the freedom to choose their working hours and the clients they work with. You are your own boss.

Variety:

- They can work with diverse groups of children and adults, and in different locations, providing a dynamic and stimulating work experience. You are able to work for a variety of different clients not just with Canopy Forest School.

Opportunity for Growth:

- As a Freelance you have the potential to develop your own unique brand and business.



Tax

You'll have some legal, financial and other responsibilities when running as a sole trader business.

Legal risks or 'liability'

Sole trader businesses have 'unlimited liability' which means owners are personally responsible for all of the debts of the business. If something goes wrong, you will have less protection. You may be able to get more protection with business insurance.

As soon as you start working for yourself you will need to choose your business name-you can choose a trading name or use your own name.

Keeping records and accounts

When you start trading you must keep records. This will help you work out your profit or loss for your Self Assessment tax return.

Registering as a sole trader

You can start trading straight away without registering. However, you must [register for Self Assessment as a sole trader](#) if you earn more than £1,000 in a tax year (from 6 April to 5 April). You can choose to register earlier.

After you've registered you will need to submit [Self Assessment tax returns](#).

Taxes

When you submit your Self Assessment tax return HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will work out if you need to pay [Income Tax](#) and [National Insurance contributions](#) based on your profits.

Find out about [tax reliefs for sole traders](#) to reduce your tax bill.



🌐 Set up as a sole trader: step by step - GOV.UK

If you would like any other additional help setting up as a sole trader then please talk to Emma Clode
