



Explore the Outdoors:

Get outside and connect learning to nature

This lesson will engage your child in explorations of nature, while connecting to ideas and concepts that they will learn in school or as part of their individual development. You can adapt the items you look for to your child and where they are in their own personal development.

Age: 0-5 years old

Gather your Gear

While you don't technically need anything for this activity, you could keep a nature journal or bring along a magnifying glass, bug jar, cellphone or reusable bag to collect nature treasures that you find.

Get Ready *Get your child thinking about the activity before you head outside; this will help create connections during and after your exploration time.*

What do you think we will find today?

- What is the weather outside today?
- What season is it?
- What do you notice just looking outside the window?

Based on what you are looking for, where do you think we should explore today?

- How will you feel if we accomplish our list?
- How will you feel if we can't find everything on the list today?

Explore *Go outside in your yard or your local park and explore.*

Below are some themes to explore while you are outside. Record your observations in a nature journal and spend time drawing them if you desire. Remember to leave all living creatures where you found them and try not to disturb them.

- **Colors** – explore the outdoors to find 5-10 different colors found in nature. Examine the flowers, trees, and grasses. Look for insects, birds and other forms of nature.
- **Shapes** – explore the outdoors to find 5 different shapes in nature – square, circle, rectangle, triangle, star/flower. How are the items you found similar and/or different from each other?
- **Touch/Texture** – explore the outdoors to find 5 different items in nature that feel different from each other. Be careful to not touch anything that could be poisonous or dangerous. Look for items that are soft, hard, squishy, smooth, and rough. What other items did you find and how did they feel? You can also think about temperature and if items feel cool or hot and why.
- **Alphabet** – explore the outdoors to find items in nature that begin with each letter of the alphabet. Go in order or skip around. Is it easy or hard or hard to find an item represented by each letter?
- **Size** – explore the outdoors to find items in nature that are different sizes. Can you find something that is very small, or what about very large? Can you find an item that is long, short, thick, thin? Take time to explore each item you find to describe its size and how being small/large/short/long/etc. is helpful to that item.
- **Sound** – explore the outdoors to find items in nature that make different sounds. Listen for the sounds of birds and try to describe or repeat the sound that they made. What does it sound like when you hit two



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sticks together or throw a pebble into a pool of water? Find a safe spot to stand or sit quietly and close your eyes – what do you hear?

- **Smell** – explore the outdoors to find different smells in nature. Be careful not to touch anything that may be poisonous or dangerous. Smell different types of flowers to see if they smell similar or different. What does a blade of grass smell like? If you close your eyes, what do you smell? Do you think different seasons have different smells - why or why not?
- **Mystery items** – explore the outdoors to find items in nature that you have never seen before. Take a picture or draw it in your journal. Make observations about the item and come up with a hypothesis (educated guess) as to what you think it is. When you return home, spend time researching in books or online to figure out what your mystery items were.

Recap *Have a conversation about what you saw and questions your child may have.*

- What was your favorite item you found and why?
- How did the exploration outside make you feel?
- What were some similarities and differences in items that you found?
- What do you think we would find/not find if we went back on a different day or in a different season?
- What else could we look for?

Relate *Create connections to the idea through activities*

Grab your materials: Paper, construction paper, markers, crayons, or paint

Have your child create an artifact that they can share with others

- Write a poem or a letter about what your child saw and did in their outdoor exploration. Get creative, decorate it, or draw an illustration to go with it.
- For younger children, have them draw a picture of things they saw while exploring. Have them tell their family.

It takes a team.... join ours: Help us save species by joining the “Zoo Conservation Core” and raise awareness about wild animals, their habitats and why conserving both are so important. Post your pictures and poems on your social to share with your family and friends, use the hashtag #OnlyZooATL so that we can see all your great work!

Want to know more....

Visit Zoo Atlanta’s website to learn about different animals from around the world. Using the same themes above, discuss with your child what the animal might sound like, feel like, what colors do they see. You can discuss their size and shape and make observations about their bodies or behaviors.

- <https://zooatlanta.org/animals/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/ZooAtlanta1889>