



JOURNALING NATURE OBSERVATIONS

DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY:

Go on a nature walk and encourage your child to notice features, like color, size, movement, and parts, of living things, like birds, bugs, other animals, and plants. You can also take pictures of their observations so they can remember them when they get home.

After the nature walk, encourage your child to remember the living things they noticed or look through any pictures taken and draw them in a simple journal.

STEM LEARNING AREA:

Life Science: Concepts related to living things

- **Living Things:** Animals, including insects and people, and plants

WHAT DO I NEED?:

- Paper
- Drawing utensils (pencil, crayons, coloring pencils)
- Camera (optional)

WHAT CAN I TALK ABOUT?:

- Animals
- Plants
- Insects
- Textures
- Colors
- Size
- Movement: Fly, Crawl, Run, Walk
- Compare and Contrast

WHAT CAN I ASK?:

- Can you find something that is (nature item)?
- What is the same about these items? Different?
- What colors do you see? What textures do you feel?
- How do plants grow?





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ADAPTATIONS FOR DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

Every child is different. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this suggested playtime activity. These are only suggested activity adaptations. Consider consulting your child's care team first.



Follow your child's lead and interests. Enthusiastically ask your child questions about what they are doing and what they like.



Answer your child's questions. If you do not know the answer, work together with your child to discover the answer.



Encourage your child to participate in the activity as much as possible. Praise your child's efforts and successes.

ENVIRONMENT

- Wear sunglasses or hat if sensitive to bright light and going outside
- Allow your child to wear gardening gloves or something similar if they are sensitive to different textures
- Place nature items within reach
- Start walking in the backyard or short distance, then gradually increase walking distance
- Offer child headphones if they are sensitive to sound or noise
- Choose an area that you know will have a lot of different nature items to observe.

MATERIALS

- Have child's assistive technology ready and available, including augmentative & alternative communication (AAC) device and/or power wheelchair
- Add additional materials, such as self-adhesive tape, to pencils and crayons to make it easier to grasp, lift, turn, and draw with
- Label nature items to help children notice them
- Show your child nature items that differ in size and color so they can differentiate the collected items
- Bring visuals that represent items that may be observed on the walk to support the child finding them.

INSTRUCTION

- Simplify the activity beginning with only two nature items
- Use a variety of methods of communication (sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage children
- Provide visual prompts to help the child communicate
- Provide the child with the plan for the scavenger hunt before you leave so they know what to expect. Pair the plan with specific visuals to search for if helpful.



Need visual cues?

Visit [STEMIE's Visual Cue Library](#) or check out STEMIE's tips for creating and using visual supports with [A Guide to Visual Supports](#).



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ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Play "I Spy" something [insert **nature item**]
- Use photos and drawings to help the child put together a "book" about their adventure. Share it with friends and family members.
- If you have two children, or your child has a friend over, you can make this a game and see who can find specific items first.
- Do this same activity with a grocery list (with visuals if possible).
- Check out our [Discovery Play Activities](#) for Sorting Leaves and Patterns in Nature
- Check out our [Storybook Conversations](#) for *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins.
- Check out these great books about a nature walk:
 - *A Walk Through Nature* by Libby Walden
 - *A Walk in the Forest* by Marie Dek
 - *I Took a Walk* by Henry Cole

