

# NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT

DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

Every child is different, and these are only suggested adaptations and activities. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this suggested play activity. Consult your pediatrician, physical therapist (PT), and/or occupational therapist (OT) first.



## STEM Concepts: Living Things, Observe

Going for a walk or hike is a great opportunity to get exercise and make observations in the environment. Help your child **observe, recognize, and identify living things** in their outdoor environments.

Ask your child open-ended questions during the walk to help them talk about what they are **noticing**. You can also take pictures of their observations so they can draw them when they get home.

### STEM IDEAS/WORDS

- Nature items (e.g., leaves, flowers, birds, bugs)
- Colors
- Plants (root, stem, leaf, fruit)
- Habitat & ecosystem

### MATERIALS

- Paper
- Drawing utensils (e.g., pencil, crayons, coloring pencils)

### OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- *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?*



# NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT ADAPTATIONS

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## ENVIRONMENT

- Wear sunglasses/hat if sensitive to bright light and going outside for the scavenger hunt
- 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
- Have your child wear headphones if they are sensitive to sound/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 material(s), 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 (e.g., sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage children
- Provide visual prompts to help the child communicate
- Provide hand-under-hand support to help the child find nature items
- 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.



*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.*



GARDENING

# VISUAL CUES

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Check the weather



Get dressed



Go for a walk



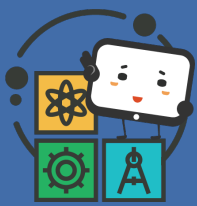
Observe



Go home



Draw observations



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## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

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- Play "I Spy" something [insert nature item]
- Whether you are taking pictures and the child is drawing them or you are just taking pictures, 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.
- Turn the scavenger hunt into a grocery list (with visuals if possible) and do the same activity in the grocery store (or another store you go with your child)
- Check out our Exploration Ideas & Adaptations for Nature Walk
- Check out our Exploration Ideas & Adaptations for Patterns in Nature
- Check out our Discovery Play Activities for Sorting Leaves
- Check out our Storybook Conversations for *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins
- Check out these great books about nature walk:
  - *A Walk Through Nature* by Libby Walden
  - *A Walk in the Forest* by Marie Dek
  - *I Took a Walk* by Henry Cole

