



SORTING LEAVES

DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY:

Go on a nature walk and encourage your child to find and collect fallen leaves.

As your child gathers leaves, help them to look closely, touch, and describe the leaves' features and notice how they are alike or different.

After the nature walk, encourage your child to sort the leaves by various characteristics, like color, size, texture, or shape.

STEM LEARNING AREAS:

Life Science: Concepts related to living things

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

Physical Science: Concepts related to objects or things, what they do, and how they move

- **Structure & Properties of Materials:** Understanding characteristics of things and how those characteristics impact what things do

Math: Concepts related to numbers, patterns, shapes, and space, and how to use them to solve problems

- **Classification & Data Analysis:** Sorting things into groups and then figuring out how many are in each group to help answer questions

WHAT DO I NEED?:

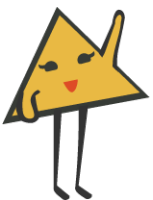
- Variety of leaves: Size, Color, Shape, Textures

WHAT CAN I TALK ABOUT?:

- Colors
- Size: Big/Small
- Matching
- Sorting
- Compare and Contrast
- Textures: Smooth/Crinkly

WHAT CAN I ASK?:

- What is the same about these leaves? Different?
- What colors do you see? What textures do you feel?
- Which leaf is smaller? Bigger? Wider?





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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 for the scavenger hunt
- Place leaves within reach
- Start walking in the backyard or short distance, then gradually increase walking distance
- Offer child headphones if they are sensitive to sound and noise
- Provide gloves for children who might be sensitive to the texture of different leaves

MATERIALS

- Have child's assistive technology ready and available, including augmentative & alternative communication (AAC) device or power wheelchair
- Bring visual supports with you to help child find leaves (see following page)
- Have containers with different labels ready to support children to sort the leaves
- Place an anti-slip mat or a tray below the leaves so they do not move
- For children with physical disabilities with fine motor or grasping needs, consider using tools/assistive devices (grabber, reacher)

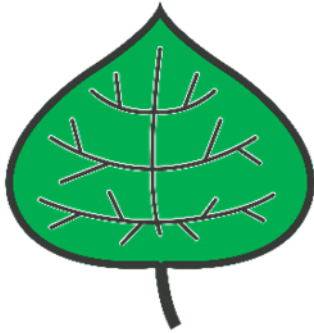
INSTRUCTION

- Use a variety of methods of communication (sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage children
- Narrate/sign your child's actions
- Break the activity down into smaller steps: First go outside, then walk, then look for leaves, then sort. Allow for child breaks in between the steps if needed.
- Allow longer waiting time for child to respond and process this activity



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VISUAL CUES FOR DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



Aspen



Birch



Elm



Ginkgo



Gum



Maple



Oak



Olive



Sycamore



Need more 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:

- Collect additional items (rocks, flowers, acorns) and sort those items by their characteristics.
- Make a plan with your child before you go on the walk and look for specific types of leaves (or items) before you sort them. Record whether you find them or not.
- Check out our [Discovery Play Activities](#) for Journaling Nature Observations and Patterns in Nature
- Check out our [Storybook Conversations](#) for *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins
- Check out these great books about trees:
 - *I See Trees* by Tim Mayerling
 - *Trees* by Tony Johnston
 - *Tall Tree* by Anthony Fredericks

