



ON A WALK

DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD



ABOUT THIS ROUTINE:

Taking a walk or going on a stroller ride is a great opportunity to support STEM learning! Talk about STEM ideas and use STEM words as you go.

Next time you take a walk or stroller ride, tell your child you want their help looking for different **plants** and **animals**.

"I wonder what plants and animals we will encounter on our walk today. We might notice flowers or maybe we will observe some trees or notice some birds or squirrels."

As you start walking, ask your child what plants and animals they encounter. Give your child wait time to respond. Ask your child **to notice colors, sizes, textures, sounds, and similarities and differences** of their observations.

If your child is interested in keeping track of what they find, consider documenting on your walk or follow up your walk or stroller ride with an art activity for them to document their findings.

STEM LEARNING AREAS:

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

- **Sound:** Vibrations that can be heard or felt when objects move
- **Structure and Properties of Materials:** Understanding characteristics of things and how those characteristics impact what things do

Life Science: Concepts related to living things

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

Every child is different. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this suggested daily routine. 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.



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ADAPTATIONS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD'S LEARNING?

ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENT

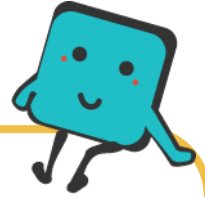
- Use modified and supported seating in a wagon or stroller

MATERIALS

- Have child's assistive technology ready and available, including augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device
- Use adaptive devices (such as a reacher) to help your child pick up nature items (such as sticks, leaves)
- Provide binoculars or magnifiers
- Bring along a story box with feathers, fur, nature items, etc.
- Provide a visual map (see following pages for an example with photos that you can use or you create your own)
- Use Braille on the visual cue cards to support children with visual impairment

INTERACTIONS OR INSTRUCTION

- Narrate or sign your child's actions
- Use a variety of methods of communication (such as sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage your child
- Communicate with your child at eye level
- Speak or sign slowly, emphasize keywords, and wait for a response
- Praise your child's efforts with words, facial expression, or body language
- Make eye contact and smile as you talk to your child
- Support children with communication challenges or visual impairments by using actual objects or pictures to represent steps of the routine
- Consider using visual cues or a tablet with pictures of the objects to signal next steps or each step of the sequence (see following pages)
- Prepare your child for the stroll so they know what to expect. Show them images of what they might notice and do.



Adaptations are simple changes you can make to your child's space, toys, or activities to help them stay engaged and learn STEM ideas and words during daily routines.

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](#).



Quick Tip:

Communication may include the use of words, signs, gestures, and different types of cues, such as touch, object, movement, or visual.



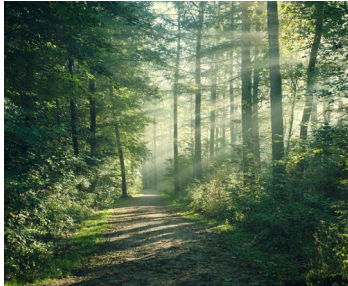


THINGS TO SEE ON A NATURE WALK

EXAMPLE VISUAL MAP



Dandelions



Trees



Squirrel



Spiderweb



Water ripples



Leaves



Pinecone



Birds



Ladybug



THINGS TO SEE ON A NATURE WALK

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ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

LIVING THINGS RECOGNIZER

Description: Help your child **observe** and **explore attributes** and characteristics of **living things (plants, flowers, trees, birds, bugs)** and **non-living things (rocks, soil)**.

What My Child Is Learning!

Children learn best by interacting with people and objects. Introduce STEM words, ask questions, and encourage them to make connections between words and real-life experiences. This helps children develop fundamental critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Point out and describe things you and your child are **noticing** with your **senses (see, hear, feel, smell/taste)**, such as the **birds chirping, bugs buzzing, and fragrant flowers**. **“I hear the cardinal chirping!”**

Encourage their exploration by talking or signing about what they are doing and seeing by saying, “Look at that fallen pinecone. I wonder how it **feels**.” “The dirt and sand feel **gritty**.” “The rocks feel **smooth**.” “You put your hand in the water and now your hand is **wet**!”

Take a short break from strolling and touch the **grass**. **“The grass feels spikey.”**

Encourage exploration of fallen leaves. “Oh, you picked up the **leaf**! What do you notice about the leaf? The leaf is **small, yellow**, and makes a **crinkling sound**.”

Point out and describe things you and your child are noticing and feeling, such as the **sun** shining. **“I feel the wind** blowing across my skin.” **“The sunshine feels so warm.”**



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ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS:

- Graph observations (such as by **color, size, number, sounds, texture**)
- Bring paper and peeled crayons for leaf or bark rubbings
- Create a nature journal, add graphs, drawings, observations, photos, **nature items**. Bring these out from time to time to **compare across the seasons**.
- Gather **nature items** that have fallen to the ground, like **leaves**, for children to further observe and make a drawing or painting to represent the items or to add to nature journal.
- Check out our Discovery Play Activities on **STEMIE Learning Trajectories** (<https://stemielearningtrajectories.fpg.unc.edu/>) for:
 - Color Scavenger Hunt
 - Journal Nature Observations
 - Patterns in Nature
 - Touching Textures
- Check out our Storybook Conversations on **STEMIE Learning Trajectories** (<https://stemielearningtrajectories.fpg.unc.edu/>) for:
 - *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats
 - *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins
 - *The Hike* by Alison Farrell
- Check out these books about **nature** walks:
 - *A Walk Through Nature* by Lib Walden
 - *Walk and See: 1 2 3* by Nosy Crow Publisher
 - *I Took a Walk* by Henry Cole
 - *The Pinecone Walk* by Barbara Springfield

