

ON A WALK

DAILY ROUTINE EXPLORATIONS 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 daily routine. Consult your pediatrician, physical therapist (PT), and/or occupational therapist (OT) first.



Did you know daily routines and activities are a great opportunity to support STEM learning? You can talk about STEM ideas and use STEM words as you go through the day.

Next time you take a walk/stroller ride, tell your child you want their help looking for different **plants and animals** on your walk today. *"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, 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/stroller ride with an art activity for them to document their findings.

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

- Use modified and supported seating in a wagon or stroller



ON A WALK ADAPTATIONS

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MATERIALS

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

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

INTERACTIONS/INSTRUCTION

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

Note: Communication may include the use of words, signs, gestures, and different types of cues (e.g., touch, object, movement, visual, etc.)

- Narrate/sign your child's actions
- Use a variety of methods of communication (e.g., sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage your child
- Communicate with your child at eye level
- Speak/sign slowly, emphasize keywords, and wait for a response
- Praise your child's efforts with words, facial expression, and/or body language
- Make eye contact and smile as you talk to your child
- Support children with communication challenges and/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 and/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.



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.

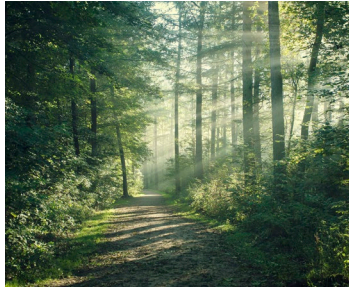


THINGS TO SEE ON A NATURE WALK

EXAMPLE VISUAL MAP



Dandelions



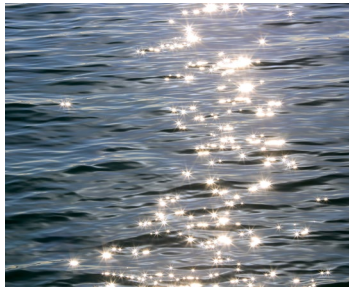
Trees



Squirrel



Spiderweb



Water ripples



Leaves



Pinecone



Birds



Ladybug



THINGS TO SEE ON A NATURE WALK

A large, empty rounded square box for recording observations.

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EXPLORATION

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Nature Noticer

Description: Help your child **observe and investigate** attributes and characteristics of **living things** (e.g., plants, flowers, trees, birds, bugs) and non-living things (e.g., rocks, soil), as well as the **weather**, with their **senses**.

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 and develop fundamental critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Point out and talk about 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 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."**

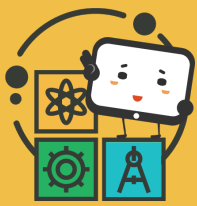
Point out and talk about things you and your child are noticing and feeling/touching, such as the **sun shining**. **"I feel the wind blowing across my skin."** **"The sunshine feels so warm."**

Ask:

What sound do you hear?

What does the [insert object] feel like?

What do you notice?



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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

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- Graph observations (e.g., by color, size, number, sounds, texture)
- Check out our Discovery Play Activities for Nature Scavenger Hunt
- Bring paper and peeled crayons for leaf and/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, painting, etc. to represent the items or to add to nature journal
- Check out our Storybook Conversations 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

