



Kids in the Biosphere Club

Friday: Exploring With Our Senses

Connecting with nature is important. Look at the natural environment around you and take a moment to really notice what you see. We learn about our surroundings by using our 5 senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight).

Sit Spot Senses

Write down the date you first try this activity. Try it again in a few days or a week. Compare what you wrote down on each day. What changes did you notice?

MATERIALS

A piece of paper or notebook, pencil, clipboard or something to write on, watch, clock and/or timer

1. Find a spot in your yard or, with an adult, go for a walk to a nearby park or natural area.
2. Find a safe spot to sit silently for three minutes (try timing yourself!).
3. While you sit, listen to the environment around you and write down:
 - a. 4 things you hear
 - b. 3 things you see
 - c. 2 things you can touch
 - d. How do you feel?
4. Look around you and try to find something that piques your curiosity. (Example: why did only some of the snow fall off the tree?)
5. Complete this sentence: I wonder _____
6. (Optional) Take a picture, share your "I wonder" with a friend or family member, and investigate the answer when you get home.

Exploring Backpack

MATERIALS
(all optional)

Clipboard, magnifying glass, a piece each of white and black paper, paint samples (natural tones), binoculars, backpack to put it all in!

1. Return to your sit spot from the first activity.
2. Have a closer look at all of the things you heard, saw, and touched, along with anything new. Use the Exploring Backpack to study these things or use your senses again with your imagination.
 - a. A magnifying glass can help you see details up close that you may have missed before.
 - b. Black or white paper can create contrast with objects you're looking at. How does a leaf appear on white paper? Can you see more or new things on black paper?
 - c. Compare the colour of nature to the paint samples you have. Can you find a part of nature that matches one?

You'll need a sibling, friend, or parent for this activity!

Meet a Tree

1. Find a place with a few trees close together (your backyard, a nearby forested area).
2. Close your eyes and have your partner safely lead you to one tree.
3. Keep your eyes closed! Hug your tree and feel all its features. Do your hands touch when you hug it? Does it have a smell? How rough or smooth is it? Can you feel any branches or needles?
4. After 30 seconds have your partner move you away from the tree and spin you around (keep those eyes closed!).
5. Open your eyes and try to find the tree you hugged! Remember the features you felt with your eyes closed.
6. Take turns with your partner.

BONUS Is this coniferous or deciduous?

Coniferous Trees

- The leaves are needles and stay on the tree year-round.
- Needles are shed throughout the year.
- The seeds are found in cones.
- You can remember the word "conifer" because it starts like "cone".
- Nearby examples: pine, cedar, spruce, hemlock.

Deciduous Trees

- The leaves are flat and come in many different sizes and shapes.
- Leaves are shed all at once in fall and are replaced with new leaves in spring.
- There is a wide variety of seed types such as acorns or maple keys.
- Nearby examples: maple, beech, ash, birch.

Making Bark Art

MATERIALS

White paper, crayons or pencil crayons

1. Draw a line down the middle of your paper. On one side write Tree 1 and on the other write Tree 2.
2. Pick a tree to start. Hold the paper against the bark with one hand. Have a crayon ready in your other hand and on the Tree 1 side, rub the crayon on the paper to create a pattern of the bark. Rubbing the crayon lightly works the best.
3. Pick a new tree that has a different type of bark from your first. Maybe it's rougher or smoother.
4. Repeat the same process with the crayons and paper on the Tree 2 side of the paper.
5. Compare the bark! Why might different trees have different bark patterns? How many different bark patterns can you make?

Spring Tree Art

MATERIALS

Paper (white, blue and green work best), paint and brushes, twigs or sticks (optional), glue (optional)

1. You choose! On your paper you can: draw an outline of a tree with bare branches or glue twigs or sticks and use that to create your tree! Glue a large stick down the middle of your paper for the trunk and place thinner twigs on either side to create your bare branches.
2. Using paint brushes, other sticks, or your fingers, create leaves all around your tree.



Photos: www.housingaforest.com/spring-cherry-tree/

A Maple Syrup Experiment

In this experiment, you'll need the help of an adult to make "maple syrup" from regular sugar. Have real maple syrup (from a tree) nearby as well, so you can compare the two creations!

Prep time: 5 min

Cook time: 15 min

Servings: 16

You might also want to prepare some pancakes or waffles to help you taste test!

Ingredients

- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup water (boiling)
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 1 teaspoon maple extract (or vanilla)

1. In a heavy skillet or pan, spread the granulated sugar in an even layer.
2. Over medium heat cook sugar until it turns brown and begins to melt. Be patient, this might take a few minutes.
3. Keep stirring the sugar. Caution, it will be very hot!
4. Once your sugar has melted and turned an amber color, remove it from the heat. Save for later.
5. In a separate saucepan, add brown sugar and boiling water. Do not stir.
6. Then add the melted sugar to the water mix. Bring to a simmer and stir frequently.
7. Once the ingredients turn into a syrupy texture, remove the saucepan from the heat and whisk in the butter and extract.
8. Pour over pancakes to enjoy!
9. Compare this with real maple syrup. Which do you like best? What is similar or different?

Testing Your Senses at Home

Want to test your senses? Try these activities at home with a sibling, parent, or friend.

MATERIALS

Medium/large cardboard box, scissors, mystery items!

Touch Test

1. Cut all the opening flaps off your cardboard box and cut two “arm holes” in the bottom. Make sure the holes are wide enough that your hands can touch when you stick your arms in the box.
2. To play, one person places a mystery item in the box. This can be anything in your house, but you want to try and find something that has a unique texture or feel.
3. The other person then slides their arms through the holes to feel around for the mystery item. Once they find it, it is up to them to guess what it is! The best part is, you’ve cut a viewing hole in the box so you can see them grabbing the item and moving it around.



Credit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBZIIALAZ5I&ab_channel=TheDadLab

Smell Test

MATERIALS

A blindfold, different foods

Most foods work best when opened or cut, so ask an adult for help. Also, make sure you don't waste any food. Do this activity right before snack time and munch away!

1. One partner will be the smeller and the other the tester.
2. The smeller will be blindfolded, and the tester will select several foods.
3. The tester will take the food and gently place it under the smeller's nose, moving it very carefully so that the smeller can get a really good sniff.
4. Now it is up to the smeller to guess the food!



Credit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBZIIALAZ5I&ab_channel=TheDadLab

Additional Resources

Books on Spring

www.treevalleyacademy.com/childrens-books-about-spring/

Why do some trees still have leaves? (younger kids)

www.youtube.com/watch/hwfQEK29Wrg

Tree Bark Information

www.theforestacademy.com/trees-in-our-lives/bark/#.YCGelndKjMI