

Check out this article for reasons why we should get outside  
<https://childmind.org/article/why-kids-need-to-spend-time-in-nature/>

## Activities for outside learning

### 1. Nature walk

- a. Go for a nature walk with a specific goal in mind : let's collect rocks, or flowers, or different types of leaves
- b. Take a nature walk to find treasures that are interesting : collect any item!
- c. You can use the items you find during these walks for other activities listed below
- d. Take a visual nature walk : point out interesting things you see, look for specific colors, or count the number of animals you see
- e. Take a sound nature walk
  - i. Find a spot to sit, close your eyes and listen to the sounds of nature
  - ii. Talk about the sounds you hear as you walk - the crunch of your feet on the path, birds chirping, the sound of leaves as a squirrel runs by
- f. Let your child be the guide, allow them some space to explore freely, wait for them to ask for your hand to help them cross a fallen log (let them determine when help is needed)
- g. Respect nature - try to collect only fallen leaves (or gently pick just one while explaining the plant needs its leaves to make its food), plant some flowers if you pick flowers in nature, always leave animals (including bugs) where you find them
- h. Make a journey stick
  - i. Bring a few rubber bands (or string) with you, find the best stick and attach the rubber band around the length of the stick
  - ii. As you walk collect items to add to your stick by placing them under the rubber bands
  - iii. When you get home you can discuss what items you found, why you chose them (what makes it special), where you found it

### 2. Bug walk - this is always a favorite, and a great time of year for it!

- a. Lift up fallen logs, large rocks etc. and look for bugs, beetles, pill bugs (rollie pollies), worms, slugs
- b. Break apart decaying logs to look for termites



### 3. Sorting

- a. Sort rocks or other nature items by texture (smooth, rough)
- b. Sort nature items by color, or shape, or heavy/light

### 4. Sink/Float

- a. Use a bucket to explore which nature items sink to the bottom and which float to the top.
- b. Try guessing which ones will float and which will sink by sorting first, or in discussion

### 5. Nature scavenger hunt

- a. If you google "nature scavenger hunt" you will find many free printables. Choose the one best suited to your child.
- b. Bring a bag to collect the items in, and when you get home go through the list and items together to compare what everyone found

6. Mandalas - geometric figure

- a. Create a mandala using only 1 nature item ex: rocks, sticks, flower petals, blades of grass
- b. Use multiple types of nature items
- c. What pictures can you create with items you have collected? What shapes?



7. Nature Book

- a. Use a journal, or staple pieces of paper together to make a nature book. Children can draw or write about the things they see or experience in nature.

8. Build something

- a. Use sticks to build a teepee or a small structure
- b. Can you tell the story of the 3 Little Pigs while building each pig's home?
- c. Build fairy houses out of sticks, rocks, flowers, leaves
- d. Give your child the freedom to create independently, encouraging collaboration
- e. Tie sticks (which you can leave unpainted or paint them first) together with string to create a hanging mobile

9. Mud

- a. Make mud pies to get creative
- b. Mud sculptures
- c. Use mud to create pictures on paper or on the sidewalk/driveway
  - i. You can use natural dyes (or food coloring) to create different colors - mulberries, clay etc...

10. Big movement - gross motor - large body movement helps with coordination, agility

- a. Roll down a hill
  - i. Some children will not like the feeling of rolling, do not force them, they may enjoy racing up a hill, or crawling!
- b. Climb a tree
- c. Create an obstacle course
- d. Go for a hike
- e. Jump in puddles
- f. Rake leaves

11. Garden - see link below for more ideas!

- a. Plant something outside if you have the space in your yard
- b. Use small planters to grow herbs inside
- c. Sprout chia seeds or bean seeds inside
- d. Use clear cups to watch the roots grow and discuss what the purpose of roots are to a plant

12. Small movement - fine motor, helps with handwriting grip and small movement of fingers

- a. Use clay to make faces on trees
- b. Weed a garden
- c. Craft with nature items (see link below for some ideas)
- d. Use items from nature as a paintbrush, you can attach items to a stick to make it look like a paintbrush or use the items as is and dip it into paint

- e. Attach double sided tape to paper and attach small nature items
  - i. Your child can make patterns, or fun designs
- f. Draw nature items in your nature book, or make a mural of nature

**13. Go outside and play!**

- a. There doesn't need to be a structure. Your child is learning every time they play outside. There is so much sensory processing happening, so much body movement, brain activity, decision making, creativity, imagination, risk taking. These are all wonderful things for your child, and this is a wonderful time of year to see changes outside!
- b. It's raining? Go outside anyway! The sound and feel of the rain falling, the sensory exploration of jumping in puddles, the exploration of making a big splash vs. a little splash, these are invaluable experiences.
  - i. Build a shelter outside using a small tarp and rope (you can hang it from a branch or try different ideas on a dry day to prepare for the rainy day ahead) or set up a small tent outside so they can take a break from the rain and listen to the rain fall on the shelter.
- c. Bring lunch, or have a snack outside. Spread out a blanket or find a log to sit on and enjoy eating outside. Eat outside in your yard, you don't have to go anywhere to enjoy a picnic!
  - i. If you bring lunch on a nature hike, pack a small backpack with wipes, a bag for trash, hand sanitizer, bug spray, sunscreen and plenty of water.



**14. Talk**

- a. Having a discussion about items you find, or your experiences together, or allowing the child to tell a story of their experience to another person encourages communication and helps them build the skills needed to properly communicate their ideas and feeling and to build their ability to tell a story.
- b. Ask questions! Can you describe this? How many flowers did you find?
- c. Tell a story - make up a story about your adventure in the forest/outdoors
  - i. Turn it into a play!

If you would like more ideas, or to ask any questions, you can reach Brandie at  
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Be safe in nature by being able to identify poison ivy, oak and sumac!

<https://www.poison-ivy.org/identify-poison-ivy-poison-oak>

Fun gardening activities

<https://www.pre-kpages.com/science-for-kids-planting-and-growing-in-preschool/>

Link to a resource for crafts made with nature items:

<https://www.redtedart.com/forest-school-activities/>

Additional fun activities:

<https://rhythmsofplay.com/forest-school-outdoor-learning-and-nature-activities-for-kids/>