



OUTDOOR EDUCATION IDEAS FOR HOME

Opposites Hike: Help me find something hard/soft, quiet/loud, stinky/fragrant using my senses

Imagine you are a tree: how does it feel when it rains

Help me choose a tree that we call “our special tree”. We can visit it often, observe it carefully, and enjoy it together. We can take pictures of this tree and include them in a tree journal. We can also record experiences we have had at the tree.

Let’s explore a familiar spot at different times of the day - first thing in the morning, in the afternoon. What do we observe? Let’s point out what is different.

Name that color. Let’s find something natural outdoors of that color.

Have me close my eyes and listen to the sounds of nature. I can even put on my “deer ears” by cupping my hands behind my ears to help me hear even better. Take turns describing the different sounds.

When we take a walk, help me collect different kinds of leaves. Then play a matching game with me. We can sort and match them by shape or color or match trees that may have come from the same type of tree. Maybe we can even identify what type of tree these came from.

Encourage me to use my finger and thumb together. Picking up little things or using tweezers to pull seeds from a sunflower or thumbs to shell corn.

Let’s find some rocks. Help me sort them by shape, size, texture or color. Then we can count them and even line them up or make a pattern or shape with them.

Look for nature wherever we go. Help watch for, point out, or name all the plants and animals I see.

Give me a bucket of water and a paintbrush. Have me “paint” the sidewalk, bricks, or rocks. Watch me to see what happens when the sun shines on my painting.

Help me plant a seed in the ground outside. Put a popsicle stick next to the seed. Help me give it water each day and mark the growth on the stick. Go further and plant a garden.

Help me point out north, south, east, and west. Talk to me about where the sun rises and sets and big landforms/marks in each direction. Let's do a scavenger hunt to find items in each direction.

Make a simple sundial with me outdoors. We can check it each hour throughout the day to see where the shadow is. Talk to me about the movement of the earth.

Give me a piece of black paper, or cloth, or use a dark towel (as a group). Help me catch snowflakes, place seeds, or collect pine needles on it. Look at the items very closely to see if there are two exactly the same.Â

Let's look for tracks or footprints in the snow, sand or mud. Help me figure out what made the tracks by looking at the 3 P's of tracking - print (size), pattern (hopping or walking), and placement (habitat). Then we can make up our own story about what we think might have happened to make the track.

Help me make a pair of binoculars by connecting two toilet paper tubes together and tying on a yarn or shoestring strap. I might want to decorate it. Go outside with me to look for birds and animals. The binoculars will help keep my attention.

Give me a small container to collect grass, leaves, feathers, little sticks, and mud to make a creation or nature picture outside. I could make a nest or sculpture.

Come outside with me on a day with big puffy clouds in the sky. Lay down next to me and watch the clouds. Talk with me about all the different shapes we see. Let's pick two clouds to see if one moves faster than the other.

Let's pick out a spot together to sit and read a book. Or make up a song about all we see from the spot we choose to enjoy together.

Take me out right after the rain. Let me splash in the puddles with my bare feet.

Play "I spy" with me outdoors. Think of something that you see. You can give me clues to help me guess what it is.

Let's draw a line in the dirt or sand and walk along it as if it were a balance beam. I will get better with practice.

Let's take two ice cubes outside on a warm day to see what happens. We can place one in the shade and one in the sun. Let's see how quickly they melt. We could also place two ice cubes in one cup and one in another. Let's check the water levels after they melt.

Let's take water outside in a container on a cold day to see what happens. We can mark the water line and come back to check what happens when water freezes.

On a sunny day have me stand very still on the sidewalk. Outline my shadow with chalk. Have me color in the features naming them as I go.

Give me a stick, or encourage me to use my finger to draw in mud, sand, or snow. I can make shapes, designs, math, or pictures.

I like to collect special treasures that we find when we are outdoors together. Give me a small bag where I can keep my treasures together. Let's use these items later for other activities or to tell stories.

Take paper and crayons (with paper removed) when we go outdoors. Have me make rubbings of different textures such as bark, leaves, pine needles, and rocks. Help me to hold the paper on the object while I rub the paper with the side of the crayon.

While we walk outside, let's watch for the motion of animals. Have me act out the movements of some of the animals and insects that we see. I can pretend to fly like a bird, run like a dog, or creep like a bug.

As we walk outside put an item from nature such as a feather, a pinecone, a rock, or evergreen needles in a large sock stretched over a container. Don't show me what it is. When I can put my hand into the sock, I can describe what I feel.

Some animals blend in or hide in the world around them. Let's play "camouflage" and try to blend into the world around us. I can blend in with a tree, hide under a bush or stand so still that I am not noticed. Then you can look for me. It's like playing "hide and seek" the nature way.

If the weather is bad, Let me watch birds from the window. Help me put some bird seed on an old plate or make a bird feeder. Then let's find a spot to watch the birds as they come to feed.

On a wet day I can play in the mud and experience how it feels between my fingers. I can even paint with mud on paper or on the sidewalk.

On a wet day we can look for worms to return from the sidewalk to their natural habitat.

I like to dig in the sand. We can create rivers and lakes and see what happens when I add water.

When it rains, I like to play in the puddles. Let's take different size containers out and learn about objects that sink and float (this could also be done in the puddles).

Let me use my senses on a rainy day. How does the rain feel on my face? What does it smell like? What new sounds do I hear?

Take me on an "alphabet hike". Let's see if we can find things in nature that start with every letter of the alphabet. What letters are harder, which are easier? We could also do this hike looking for the shapes of letters in nature. We could even make the letters using natural items.

Let's collect 6-10 different nature items such as pinecones, sticks, stones, flowers, or leaves. We can arrange them on a cloth or tray. Take one away when my eyes are closed and have me guess what is missing. As I get better, take away more than one and see if I can still remember what was there.

When we find a natural object outdoors, encourage me to think of words that describe it. A leaf, for example, may be green, smooth, soft, thin, and light.

Go for a walk around your neighborhood. Which of your neighbors has four legs? Fur? Feathers? A tail?

Stand barefoot on grass or dirt. Be very quiet and feel the sensations of your feet against the Earth. Imagine your feet are like roots going deep into the ground. How does it feel?

Hold a rock or stone in your hand. Imagine what experiences it has had. What story could it tell?

Take a walk and find a spot that feels special to you. After some quiet time, share your place with a friend. Visit it often and see if it changes. Notice if you change, too.

Place your hand on a tree that you like. Breathe slowly and deeply. Think about this: What you breathed in was breathed out by the tree, and what you breathed out is breathed in by the tree!

Go to the edge of a pond, creek or lake. What do you see living there? What other types of creatures might like to live there?

Find a leaf that draws your attention. Observe it, touch it, smell it, and see what thoughts come to you about the leaf.

Let's go moonbathing! See the way the moon lights up your skin. Is it different from the sun? Do the trees look different?

Lie quietly under a tree and look through the branches. After a few minutes, tell the person next to you what you see and how it makes you feel.

Go for a "treasure hunt" in your neighborhood. Notice all of the little "treasures" around you - an acorn, a beautiful leaf, a smooth stone. Choose one that you like and bring it back to share or write about it.

Look at the clouds with me and let's take turns telling stories about what we see in the clouds.

Look around you for the color green. How many different shades of green can you find? Which shade is your favorite? How does green make you feel?