

Children, Nature and You

You can help children experience the joy of sunshine and rain, of stargazing and bugs!



www.ChildrenNatureAndYou.org



www.ChildrenAndNature.org



Young children need to explore, experience and observe. Explorations allow children to feel the world is a safe, interesting, and friendly place. The types of activities suggested in this guide help children develop a sense of empathy, wonder and creativity.



Your role is to model a sense of curiosity, wonder and respect. Show enthusiasm and curiosity about their explorations. Make sure children are safe, but refrain from negative reactions when they get dirty, wet or touch bugs, worms, etc.

Foster and encourage imagination, and make sure there is plenty of time for unstructured play.

Introduce babies to nature through simple experiences.



Talk to your baby in a playful tone, sharing your own excitement about these explorations.



Even the youngest infant can experience nature when their stroller or bassinet is placed under a tree.

Bring nature into your home with simple bouquets of flowers, leaves, or grass, and place them so baby can see them from her crib.

During bath time, slowly squeeze water from a sponge, and let drops fall gently over baby's hands and body. Gently splash the water so baby feels it washing against his body.

Take baby to the window to see the outside world - raindrops running down the window pane, the wind blowing through the trees, sunbeams shining through the window, and shadows from passing clouds. Open the window to let in the sounds of the wind, birds, wind chimes, etc.

Take walks outside so baby can experience the sights, sounds, smells and feeling of nature.

Young Children love ritual.

A daily ritual of expressing gratitude for nature's gifts in the natural world — sun, rain, trees, flowers helps children feel a part of something beautiful and mysterious.

Welcome the day! Walk outside, and check the sky to see what kind of day it will be.

Find a place where you have a clear view of the rising sun. Get up early to see the sunrise. Build anticipation for the first glimpse of the sun.

Take a fun breakfast to eat outdoors. Here is a verse you can say together before you eat, "Earth who gives to us this food, Sun who makes it ripe and good. Dear Sun, Dear Earth, by you we live, our loving thanks we give."

Celebrate the sun going down, as you watch it sink below the horizon. Express gratitude.

As part of a bedtime routine, take your child to the window or outside to say good-night to the moon, the stars, the animals, or their favorite tree.





Allow your child to feel and play

with rocks that are big enough not to be swallowed. He may enjoy washing, sorting or carrying rocks.

Find animal and bird tracks.

Watch worms in action. After a rain, look for worms on the sidewalk. Let your child gently pick them up and wriggle across her hands as she lovingly carries them to a grassy area where they can burrow back into the ground.

Have him check on his favorite tree.



See how many different kinds of shapes of leaves you can find together.

Go on “theme walks” - color, bug, flower, animal.

Take easy camping trips to the beach, the mountains, the forest.

Take a sock hike. Wear heavy socks over shoes and go for a walk - leaves, twigs, etc., will cling. See what you’ve brought home!

Take leisurely walks with your child, and allow her to follow her interests. This will probably take her into every yard to explore the bushes, flowers, trees, etc. Your only job is to see that she is safe and does no harm to the garden she is exploring.

Provide water play in as many forms as possible - bath, fountain, and stream. Provide rain gear for jumping in puddles and exploring rain in his own way.

Take night walks with a flashlight. Cover the flashlight with clear red film to preserve night vision.

Provide a place for your child to dig in the dirt along with a water supply, trucks, shovels, and cans she can use to make pies, roads, etc.

Try to find small trees for your child to climb.

Carry a magnifying glass to take a closer look at those small wonders you encounter on your adventures.



Let's Pretend!

It is important to support and encourage your child's creativity and imagination.

This is an important part of their development.

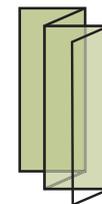
Your role is to provide an inviting environment and plenty of time for imaginative play that is unstructured and child directed.

Nature provides a stage for children's imagination to soar. Help your child create hideaways. An old curtain makes a wonderful tent. A cardboard box can be a spaceship, a house, a car. A bush can become a home for an imaginary animal. If your child has an imaginary friend, welcome and enjoy the fantasy.

A few sticks, rocks and pinecones can transform a sandbox into a farm, town, rocket launching pad, or . . . !?

At the park allow your child to find hiding places to explore. What may look uninteresting to you can be an exciting adventure.

Check out all the resource at www.ChildrenNatureAndYou.org



Print double-sided

1. Print
2. Fold
3. Enjoy!



Look for and watch ladybugs, ants, spiders and their webs, etc. Be still, and watch your child. Explain that bugs are not to be hurt.

Lie down under a tree, and look up through the branches. Listen for sounds. Encourage your child to listen beyond the sounds of the city to hear the sounds of nature.

Take children to the Farmer's Market, and let them experience all the different foods and colors. Tasting can be an adventure!

In the fall look for leaves and seed pods. In the spring look for signs of new growth. Take along a bag to collect treasures.

Make time to look up at the night sky. Gently encourage conversation at the child's level about the wonder and awe of so many stars.

Provide experiences with wind using kites, pinwheels, leaves or any light material tied to a string.