



Outdoor Science Fun

Children are curious about things in the world—and excited to learn about them. Introducing your child to the sights, sounds, smells, and textures found in the outdoors will spark her curiosity and inspire her to explore with all of her senses. When she investigates things in the natural world, she has opportunities to act and think like a scientist and learn about the world and her place in it.

Outdoor exploration means lots of running, climbing, and getting dirty. Let your child explore on her own as well as with you. Be sure her exploration takes place in a safe place and with a caring adult at her side. Then have fun!

- Take a walk around your neighborhood. You don't need a destination—just get out and go! Plan to stop frequently and let your child look at, listen to, smell, and touch things. Talk about what he discovers.
- Let your child's interests lead the way. If he is curious about trees, look closely at different trees. Compare trees. Compare the color or texture of bark or leaves. Look for insects or animals that live in trees. Research trees on the Internet, at the library, or visit an arboretum.
- Create ramps out of found objects or use a playground slide and let your child experiment with sliding and rolling objects.
- Take a walk together and bring tools so your child can make observations and record the observations. You might bring a magnifying glass for observing, a notebook and pen for drawing and writing, or a camera for taking pictures of things your child observes. Use the pictures and drawings to talk about her observations at another time.
- Use your windowsill or doorstep for outdoor explorations with your child. Put a tray of ice cubes outside your door on a sunny day or plant seeds in a pot outside the window. Poke your heads out the window to observe the night sky and talk about how it changes throughout the week.
- Be excited about your child's discoveries and take time to really focus on what she found, where she found it, and what she thinks it is.
- Support your child's curiosity by asking lots of "What if..." questions as he explores outdoors.
- Prepare yourself for your child's questions. If your child has a question you can't answer, it's okay to say, *I don't know, let's find out*. If possible, investigate with your child to find the answer. If not, look online, in books, at a park, or in a museum to find the answer together.
- Be prepared for messy outdoor explorations with play clothes, towels, wipes, and a bag or container for holding rocks, leaves, sticks, or other treasures your child collects.