

ART AND NATURE

Thank you for downloading the Art and Nature Adventure Pack. These activities are designed to inspire you to create learning experiences for your child that are filled with joy, play, wonder, and creativity. Get ready to explore, experiment, tinker, build, and learn alongside your child.



OVERVIEW

Nature offers us a sanctuary, a place where we can find peace, wonder, and inspiration. The arts teach children that there are multiple ways to see the world and express themselves. Many artists through history, from Claude Monet to Andy Goldsworthy, have used nature to inform and inspire their work. From creating miniature magical worlds to composing a symphony of sound, head outdoors and use these activities to help stimulate your child's sense of adventure and imagination. Choose one activity or complete all the challenges.

GETTING STARTED

1. Introduce the words *art* and *nature* to your child and form a definition together. There are no right or wrong answers. Art and nature are experienced differently and mean different things to each of us, but be sure to point out the absence of manmade features in your nature definition. For older children, consider creating a collage, a journal entry, or a word web.
2. Take a field trip. If you can't go in person, many parks and museums offer virtual tours including [Paris' the Louvre](#), and [Yellowstone National Park](#). Use the worksheets at the end of the packet to help guide your in person or virtual experience.
3. Challenge your child to describe how the artwork and natural spaces they have seen make them feel. Have your child draw or journal about their favorites using their field trip worksheets.
4. For further exploration study artists such as Claude Monet, Andy Goldsworthy, Walter Mason, Katerina Apale, Matsuo Bashō, and many more!

TIPS AND TRICKS

- **Encourage questions**
There are no right or wrong answers on the path to discovery. A scientist does not know the answers to every question, but rather knows how to ask the right questions. It's okay not to have all the answers!
- **Be curious**
Foster your child's innate sense of curiosity as well as your own. Ask guiding questions and work alongside your child, acting as a partner in discovery.
- **Spend time outdoors**
Nature offers thousands of opportunities to challenge ourselves, solve problems, and use our imaginations. Use all of your senses to explore the wonderful world outdoors.

TOWER HILL
BOTANIC GARDEN

DIY NATURE JOURNAL

A nature journal is the perfect place to grow your young naturalist's connection with the world around them. It can be used to record observations, practice descriptive imagery, compose poetry, create scientific illustrations, and much more. Follow the simple steps below to design an upcycled nature journal and practice some of the tips for creating entries and sketches.

GETTING STARTED

Channel your creative side and make your own nature journal with upcycled or natural materials. Gather cereal boxes or other thin cardboard pieces for a cover and recycled computer paper or an old notepad for the filler. Whichever materials you choose, have your child measure and cut each piece, cover included so they are the same size. Stack your cut papers and punch two or three holes on the left side of each to act as a spine. Use twine, yarn, or ribbon to tie all of your pages and cover together. Finish your creation by decorating the cover. Watercolor paintings, leaf rubbings, stickers, or magazine cutouts are all great options to unleash your child's creativity. Once your journal is complete head outside and start recording.

CHALLENGE

Encourage your child to add detail to their journal entries by incorporating some of the tips below. Bring along tools such as binoculars, hand lenses, field guides, and rulers to help your child look closely and make observations of the world around them.

- Date entries
- Add labels to sketches
- Add color to sketches
- Ask questions
- Incorporate graphs or other visual aids
- Use vocabulary words
- Make observations using all five senses
- Study the details
- Write short stories or poems

GRADE LEVEL

1st to 12th

SUBJECT AREAS

Art, Science, Literacy, Math

MATERIALS

- Recycled cardboard
- Paper
- Twine
- Hole punch
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Colored pencils



RESOURCES

- *Keeping a Nature Journal* by Clare Walker Leslie & Charles Roth
- *Draw 500 Things From Nature* by Eloise Renouf

NATURE HAIKU

Grab your nature journal, hit the trails with your child, and express yourself through poetry. A haiku is a style of poetry originating from Japan. These short poems follow a simple 5-7-5 syllable pattern and typically focus on nature. Try composing your own haikus as a way to practice vocabulary and descriptive imagery, and introduce your child to the world of poetry.

GETTING STARTED

Introduce the activity by reading some poetry or haikus with or to your child. Introduce the structure of a haiku and practice the 5-7-5 syllable structure by clapping together, or drumming with sticks and rocks. Head outside and spend a few minutes free exploring—encouraging your child to use all of their senses. Wrap up by challenging your child to focus on one of the senses; for example sit quietly, close your eyes, and open your ears. Find a spot to sit and begin by writing down descriptive words about what you saw, heard, smelled, felt, or even tasted to help kickstart your creativity, then start to practice your haikus. Change locations or focus on different senses to get more inspiration!

'The Old Pond' by Matsuo Bashō

*An old silent pond
A frog jumps into the pond—
Splash! Silence again.*

CHALLENGE

Challenge your child to use specific vocabulary words or add drawings to accompany their poetry. Once your child has practiced composing their haikus, introduce the haiga, another form of Japanese poetry. A haiga, unites a haiku poem, written in calligraphy, with a simple painting or colorful sketch.

Encourage older children to explore additional types for prose by naturalists including Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau.

GRADE LEVEL

2nd to 12th

SUBJECT AREAS

Art, Science, Literacy, Math

MATERIALS

- Journal
- Pencil



RESOURCES

- *Hi, Kool!: A Year of Seasons* by Jon Muth
- *The Cuckoo's Haiku* by Michael J. Rosen
- *Haiku Night* by Betsy E. Snyder
- *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau
- *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman
- *Write Your Own Haiku for Kids* by Patricia Donegan

FAIRY HOUSES & GNOME HOMES

Creating magical worlds is a great way to foster your child's sense of wonder and creativity. Building fairy houses stimulates your child in many ways by creating, observing, collecting, exercising, and communicating, all while appreciating and exploring the natural world. The world outdoors is full of enchantment and mystery, all you need is a little imagination and fairy dust.

GETTING STARTED

Begin the creative process by asking your child to dream up their own fairy or other magical being. Challenge them to draw or write about their magical friends, where they live, what their powers are, and what they like.

Head outdoors and find a quiet place to build, reminding your child to leave no trace and be respectful of plants and animals. Have your child revisit their sketch or story and search for materials to begin building their abodes. Sticks, moss, bark, dry grasses, pebbles, shells, feathers, seaweed, pinecones, and nuts are all great materials to build with. Remember, fairy houses take many different forms and can be found anywhere, but most look so natural that they blend in with their surroundings. Foster your child's creativity and encourage them to add different features; maybe dry leaves will become a roof, acorn caps will serve as teacups, or some smooth stones will act as a walkway.



GRADE LEVEL

PreK to 5th

SUBJECT AREAS

Art, Science, Literacy

MATERIALS

- Journal
- Pencil
- Assorted natural materials



RESOURCES

- *Fairy Houses* by Trace Kane
- *Fairy Houses ... Everywhere!* by Trace Kane
- *Backyard Fairies* by Phoebe Wall
- *Woody, Hazel, and Little Pip* by Elsa Beskow

NATURE SELF-PORTRAITS

Self-portraits can be a great exercise in creativity and self-expression. It is challenging and fun to try to replicate one's own image in a realistic way and it can be interesting to see how your child sees themselves. Whether its ferns for hair, flower petals for lips, or acorns for eyes, this activity will allow your child to practice planning skills, experiment with textures, patterns, colors, and shapes, and express themselves using nature as a guide.

GETTING STARTED

Challenge your child to study their face in the mirror, what features do they notice about themselves? What shape is their face? Next provide a piece of cardstock, cardboard or heavy paper and prompt your child to outline the shape of their face. Head outdoors and provide a box or bag for your child to collect natural materials. Have your child plan out their portrait by selecting materials for their features and placing them inside their face shape. Once they are satisfied, glue it all together. Extend the fun and create nature portraits of your friends and family or even your pets. For an added challenge, direct your child to use their imagination to dream up a magical friend like a whimsical forest fairy, or a cheerful garden gnome. Construct their likeness in the form of a small figurine using your collected materials.

CHALLENGE

Continue your walk outdoors by searching for faces in nature. Maybe you'll find some friends in the clouds, or eyes in a gnarled old tree. Challenge your child to think about their self-portrait and the choices they made by answering some of the questions below through discussion or journaling.

- What materials did you use?
- Why did you choose these materials?
- What colors, textures, or shapes did you use?
- What do you like best about your portrait?
- How does your portrait reflect who you are?
- What other nature portraits did you create?

GRADE LEVEL

PreK to 5th

SUBJECT AREAS

Art, Science, Literacy

MATERIALS

- Cardstock
- Glue
- Pencil
- Bag
- Assorted natural materials



BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

Art helps us to express ourselves and can make us think, dream, imagine, and stop and look at the world in a way we may not have seen it before. Botanical artists throughout history have created detailed portraits of plants from across the globe. These pieces are not only beautiful, but are scientifically accurate, and allow botanists to study plants from all over the world. Creating your own botanical illustrations allows your child to observe, study, be creative, and appreciate the beauty of the world around them.

GETTING STARTED

Study different pieces of botanical art by flipping through field guides or researching artists and their work online. Elizabeth Blackwell, Marianne North, and Leonardo da Vinci are all great artists to begin your study. Challenge your child to practice comparing and contrasting the work of different artists or different species of plants. Head outside or start with a plant in your own home. To begin, spend a few minutes making and recording observations and use a hand lens to study the details. Ask questions throughout to help guide your child's observations and investigation. Direct your child to sketch their plant using pencil then add color with colored pencils, crayons, or even watercolors.

CHALLENGE

Encourage your child to be as detailed as possible in creating their illustrations and be sure to add descriptions and labels. Challenge younger children to label the *leaves*, *flower*, *stem*, and *roots*. Challenge older children to do independent research and label the reproductive parts including the *pistil* and *stamen*. Extend the study by creating multiple sketches and incorporating a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the features in each of your child's drawings. Bring along a field guide to help your child identify the plants they sketch. Move on to more difficult subjects or animals and have your child work in their nature journal, recording observations, questions, and ideas.

GRADE LEVEL

1st to 12th

SUBJECT AREAS

Art, Science, History

MATERIALS

- Journal
- Pencil
- Colored pencils
- Hand lens



RESOURCES

- *Peterson's First Field Guide to Trees* by Robert Troy Peterson
- *Peterson's First Field Guide to Wildflowers* by Robert Troy Peterson
- *Botanicum* by Kathy Willis & Katie Scott

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

Nature photography is the perfect fusion of nature and art and allows your child to see the world outside in a new and exciting way. Capture nature's beautiful moments together and freeze your most treasured memories in time. From blooming spring flowers to a colorful sunset, encourage exploration of the world outdoors through a different lens.

GETTING STARTED

To begin, explore the work of some renown nature photographers including Ansel Adams, Frans Lanting, and Phillip Hyde. Prompt your child to discuss or journal about some of the favorite photographers and the images they have captured and plan out the type of photographs they want to try (i.e. landscapes, birds, flowers, etc.). Next work together, guiding your child to explore the features of the device they are using. No need for an expensive digital camera, the camera on your smartphone will do just fine! Once your child is familiar with their camera, head outdoors and start your photographic journey. Allow your child to explore freely and capture images of whatever piques their interest. Follow the simple tips below to perfect your skills.

- **Be observant.** You can take beautiful nature photos right in your backyard. Keep your eyes open for interesting textures, subjects, angles, and lighting.
- **Hold it steady.** This can be challenging especially for younger children. Lend a helping hand or use a tripod.
- **Use the rule of thirds.** Instead of placing your subject directly in the middle of the frame, try placing it one third of the way along or off to one side. This will allow you to capture features to frame the main subject, for example the leaves and branches of a tree.
- **Be patient.** Sit quietly and wait for your subject to find you!
- **Practice makes perfect.** The best thing about digital images is they are unlimited. Snap away!

CHALLENGE

For younger children, turn their nature photography lessons into a scavenger hunt by making a list of things for your child to photograph. This can also be scaled up for older children by requiring them to capture a specified number of flowering plants, insects, birds, or mammals. Extend the fun and create a digital slideshow or put together a scrapbook of your favorite images. Washi tape, old wrapping paper, nature journal entries, and colorful paper all make great scrapbooking supplies.

GRADE LEVEL

1st to 12th

SUBJECT AREAS

Art, Science, History

MATERIALS

- Camera



MAKING MUSIC

Music has been around for centuries, with the first musical instruments being simple items from nature such as sticks and stones. Music and nature collide as a source of self-expression unique to each of us. Head outdoors and see what interesting sounds you can create using nature as your muse

GRADE LEVEL

PreK to 5^h

SUBJECT AREAS

Art, Music, History, Literacy

GETTING STARTED

Start out by discussing or journaling about music. Have your child listen to their favorite song or share one of your own and challenge them to think about the song, how it makes them feel, and see what instruments they can identify. Do some research together and create a timeline of musical history, taking note of what inspired the creation of some of the earliest instruments and what materials they were made of.

Head outdoors and after allowing some time for free exploration, encourage your child to focus on their sense of hearing. Prompt them to write down sounds they can identify and what each one reminds them of. Consider writing a haiku about the sounds you hear together. Guide their sensory exploration and point out different sounds such as bird calls, the wind whistling through the trees, frogs croaking, the crunch of leaves under their feet, and more. Learn to whistle through an acorn cap or a blade of grass or practice mimicking some of your favorite local birds such as the chickadee, red winged blackbird, cardinal, or mourning dove.

Introduce and create some of the natural instruments below or allow your child to free explore on their own, experiment, and create an original symphony.

Bilma

Also known as clap sticks, this instrument originated in Aboriginal Australia. Striking two clap sticks together forms a beat and often accompanies the didgeridoo and is a part of singing, dancing, and celebrating. Search for the perfect two sticks and practice keeping a beat. Try sticks of different shapes and sizes and notice how the tone changes. Take your favorite sticks home and decorate with paint by creating patterns and adding color.

`ili`ili

`ili`ili are small waterworn stones used by dancers in Hawaiian culture to accompany a particular hula style. They are held in the dancer's hand and are tapped together for percussion. Try finding some smooth stones to see what rhythms you can create!

CHALLENGE

Challenge your child to compose and record their own song. Work with others to add in lyrics and different natural instruments to create your own nature rock band!

MATERIALS

- Sticks
- Rocks
- Journal
- Pencil

ART IN THE LANDSCAPE

Art can come in all shapes and forms. Creating an ephemeral art piece with your child can teach them that art does not have to be permanent. Pieces in the landscape like those created by land artist Andy Goldsworthy can teach children that art can change with the season, blow away with the wind, or wash into the ocean with the crash of a wave.

GETTING STARTED

Research the work of land artists such as Andy Goldsworthy, Nils-Udo, Patrick Dougherty, and Robert Smithson. Encourage your child to study their pieces and make observations. Challenge older children to answer some of the following questions by writing or drawing in their nature journals.

- What materials did the artist use?
- How do you think this will change over time?
- What materials would you use?
- How would you arrange your materials?

To begin, head outside and search for natural elements of all shapes and sizes. Collect your materials and choose a spot to display them. Each location and item poses a unique set of challenges and opportunities, so start off small. Guide your child to classify and sort their items by arranging by size or color, or to create a pattern. Mix up the materials you are using and combine different textures, shapes and sizes. Make an arrangement of fall leaves, create a long line of sticks, or build a stone serpentine line, the main goal is to be creative! Check back on your ephemeral pieces to see how they change over time and challenge your child to write or draw about the changes they observe.

GRADE LEVEL

1st to 12th

SUBJECT AREAS

Art, Literacy

MATERIALS

- Journal
- Pencil
- Assorted natural materials

RESOURCES

- *Anywhere Artist* by Nikki Slade Robinson
- *Leaning into the Wind* directed by Thomas Riedelsheimer
- *Time* by Andy Goldsworthy



MY TRIP TO _____

Pick a painting or other piece of art to study and answer the questions below using complete sentences.

1. What artist did you chose to study? Why?

2. What is the title of the art piece?

3. What is going on in this art piece?

4. What part(s) of nature does this remind you of?

5. How do you think this artist was in spired by nature?

Look outside your window and draw what you see! Make observations and be creative.



MY TRIP TO _____

Pick national park or outdoor space to explore and answer the questions below using complete sentences.

1. What natural space did you explore? Why?

2. Where is your natural space located?

2. Describe the landscape or features of this natural space.

4. How is this natural space similar or different to where you live?

5. What was your favorite part of your trip? Why?

Create your own original artwork inspired by your explorations in nature.

Be creative and use your imagination! What colors, textures, and patterns will you use?

