

Family Learning Activity: Nature Drawing



Starting a family nature journal is a great way to spend quality time as a family, develop your child's observation skills, and gain a respect for nature all at the same time! Even if you are not an artist, simple sketches will help you see details and record nature's variations—and family and friends will certainly appreciate them for years to come!

What You Will Need:

- pencils, clipboards, and copy paper or a sketch book*
 - your keen sense of observation! :-)
 - digital camera (optional)
- *Use a sketch book to keep your drawings in one place. If you use loose paper, start a family folder or portfolio with your labeled and dated nature sketches.*

What To Do:

1. **Choose a favorite place**, such as a local nature center or your own backyard, and observe objects in their natural habitat. (If you really want to collect an object, do so only where it is permitted, and collect fallen objects only.)
2. **Decide how long you will draw**, be it 10 or 30 minutes. Wear comfy clothes, and come ready to settle in.
3. **Choose a subject to draw**. You could choose a subject, such as a plant or animal that makes an impression when you arrive, or a theme such as seasonal changes, changes in your own yard, or visits to special places. You can play with different perspectives, such as eye-level, on the ground, or overhead. Note weather conditions and the date and time. Relax, have fun, and explore your connection with the natural world!
4. **Proudly display your creations at home** after you finish. Give them value by placing them in clear view on the refrigerator. Review the journal on the couch as a family if the journal is bound. If you'd like, create your own paperless scrapbook by scanning in your sketches and notes and combining them with digital photographs. You can even put it on a CD for posterity!
5. **Return to do more drawings** from time to time. Whether once a month or once a season, activities that grow over time lead to more sustained family learning.



Library and Internet Resources:

- *Nature Journaling* by Clare Walker and Charles E. Roth. Storey Communications, 1998.
- *The Sierra Club Guide to Sketching in Nature* by Cathy Ann Johnson. Sierra Club Books, 1997.
- Tips for Sketching in the Field - <http://data.massgis.state.ma.us/Biodiversity/draw.htm>



Green Tip

Plant native flowering plants and shrubs in your backyard. They are adapted to the unique conditions of your biome, require less water, and are more disease resistant!