



Family Learning Activity: Take a Hike! A Family Forest Walk

Open your eyes, ears, and noses to life in the forest by exploring a local forest or woodland.

What You Will Need:

- light-colored long pants and long-sleeved shirts
- map (if needed)
- nature journal(s)
- pencils



What To Do:

1. **Choose a favorite woodland or forest.** Let someone know where you are going and bring a trail map so you don't get lost.
2. **Encourage inquiry and discovery without disturbing natural habitats.** Here are two ideas:

The Fungus Among Us: The Decomposers Challenge

Look for as many decomposers as you can find (mushrooms, slime molds, etc.).
Decomposers are the clean up crew of the forest!

Flower Power!

I am: pretty, colorful, sweet smelling. You are: a terrific spreader of pollen...

Look for examples of the ways flowers attract bees and other pollinators—color, pattern, shape, smell, etc. Flowers need pollinators to reproduce and bees need nectar for food. Sketch the different flowers in your nature journal.



3. **Develop patience through careful observation of an animal's interaction with a plant or tree,** or look for signs of animals. Sketch your observations in your nature journal. Here are some things to look, listen, and smell for:

Look

buds, berries, leaves, flowers
bird, squirrel nests, burrows
animal footprints
scratching/digging marks
under a rotting log or rock*
scat (poop)
snags (standing dead trees)

Listen

spring peepers' calls
the twang of wood frogs
a chipmunk's "chuc, chuc"
birds' calls
squirrels burying nuts
crickets chirping
wind blowing through trees

Smell

spicebush or peppermint
a flower's fragrance
humus and leaf litter
skunk cabbage
a rotten log
huckleberry

**If you turn over logs and rocks, make certain that you carefully put them back and that you don't crush any organisms.*

4. **At home, share your journals together** on the couch. It's a great way to relive your exploration and review what you've learned together as a family!

Green Tip

Look for simple ways to create habitat for wildlife in your yard. Put up a bat house, bee house, or birdhouse.

