



FAMILIES' CLUB KIT

Sample Adventure Activity #1: Get to Know a Tree

GETTING STARTED...

These **Adventure Activities** support a wide range of ages, interests and abilities. Children are able to develop skills and understandings in many areas of development at the same time as they engage in personally meaningful explorations of the world around them. The richest kind of learning happens in this holistic way. Truly deep learning also happens when children are highly motivated to gain information and then communicate their understandings back to others. Learning is powerfully supported by having shared experiences with others.

Review the **Facilitator Notes** that coincide with each Adventure Activity. These will help you choose a location to explore and plan for materials to bring with you. They also offer some suggestions for supporting a variety of age groups, related children's books and additional adult resources.

Decide if you want to print one Adventure Activity for each child. They are designed so that young children can understand the prompts and older children can read them.

Outdoor spaces filled with "nature's treasures" provide an ideal venue to show children that the world is a good place. As children have the time and space to connect with nature and to find out and express who they uniquely are, they grow up knowing the world as a place full of wonder, a place worth learning about, a place worth caring for and protecting.

The approach to environmental education through these activities is less about imparting factual information to children and more about free discovery on each child's own terms. Personal perceptions, attitudes, and connections with nature are the key goals, and facilitating positive experiences varies from child to child.

The original content material for Adventure Activities 1-9 was compiled in collaboration with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension and 4-H Office.



VISUAL CLUES

These symbols can be found throughout the **Adventure Activities** and provide visual clues to guide children in their exploration.



LOOK



SMELL



HEAR



TOUCH



MOVE



GET TO KNOW A TREE

Choose a tree in the area that you think is interesting. Use your senses to get to know your tree! Here are some ideas.



LOOK CLOSELY...
do you see any shapes?



TOUCH YOUR TREE...
how does it feel?



LISTEN...
does your tree or anything in it make sounds?



SMELL...
does it make you think of anything that you have smelled before?

If you pay close attention, you might find some **"TREASURES OF NATURE"** in your tree. Place a cloth or towel under the tree. What do you predict might fall on the cloth?

You might find...



BUGS?



PODS?



NUTS?

Have an adult shake a branch of your tree and see what falls out. Were your predictions correct?

GET TO KNOW A TREE

These research-based Adventure Activities have been designed to support whole-child development and positive connections with the natural world.

Location Ideas

This activity can be done anywhere...it can even be a good introduction to your own Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom. Other possible locations could be a neighborhood park or green space, local zoo, nature center, or botanical garden. It is good to teach children that nature is everywhere. It can be fun and surprising to see what natural treasures you can find almost anywhere if you take the time to slow down, look closely, and enjoy!

Supplies

- Adventure Activity Sheet #1 **Get To Know A Tree**
- A sheet or towel to place under a tree. If working with families, you could ask them to bring their own.

"I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to know as to feel. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. The years of early childhood are the time to prepare the soil."

—Rachel Carson,
The Sense of Wonder

Links to Good Books

Any good storybook that encourages children to use their senses or to observe carefully fits well with this activity. Doing an activity like this fuels children's natural curiosity and inspires children to find out more information about what they are observing on their own. Also, finding "fact books" to learn what kind of insect or nut the child saw is a fun extension to what they have already done and a very meaningful way to learn.

Some good books are:

- *Have You Seen Trees?* by Joanne Oppenheim
- *Hello Tree* by Joanne Ryder
- *A Tree is Nice* by Janice May Udry

Adaptations

Young children explore the world around them by touching, smelling, and examining things to make their own discoveries. Children communicate what they are learning when they share the experience with observant adults. For example, if a non-verbal child picks up two different leaves and holds them up to look at them, this is an opportunity for the adult to comment on the child's discovery, "Oh! You found two leaves that are different!" With a verbal child, the adult can encourage descriptions of similarities and differences in the leaves. Adults need to watch and listen to children closely to learn about their discoveries.

Additional Resources and Support

- www.childrenandnature.org This website has two annotated bibliographies of research related to the importance of connecting children and nature.
- www.hookedonnature.org This website has resources for educators working with young children.