

More Tips for Parents



TAKE IT OUTSIDE - Many indoor activities can be done outdoors. Read your child's favorite book, in the yard or on the porch, colour, craft, or listen to music. Make snack time a picnic. Take a walk everyday and monitor the progress of something - an ant hill, a sprouting plant. Check on it in all sorts of weather for a new perspective.

SET ASIDE TIME TO BE ALONE IN NATURE

Even though you are close by, allow your children moments of solitude in nature. Step back and give time and space for exploration and investigation of the natural world. This encourages your children to observe and appreciate nature on their own.

NUTURE A CURIOSITY FOR NATURE - Children are naturally curious. The outdoors offer endless opportunities for exploration and discovery. Challenge your children to use all their senses! What sounds can they detect? How many colours make up this tree bark? Why would that snake make such a smell? Feel the wind; which direction is it blowing? Be inquisitive yourself, model wonder, and share your observations. Nature provides a wraparound, multi-sensory experience that invites immersion.

KEEP AN "I WONDER" LOG - Nature raises plenty of "why" questions. Record the questions generated on an outing in a journal or on board. Use these musings as a start point for deeper exploration and understanding. Search out the answers together - in books, online, or ask experts. Everything in nature has purpose or function for us to discover.

CREATE TRADITIONS - Build special memories that encourage your child to identify with nature. Regular outdoor activities, monthly picnics, shadow tag under each full moon, a sunrise breakfast to mark the change of season, all make great family traditions. While discovering new places is great, there is merit in revisiting a natural spot enjoyed in the past. Pointing out changes from the last visit inspires curiosity and an enticement to return! Create other family traditions such as collecting stones shaped in weird forms or selfies with funky trees. Start with something that's easy and fun to accomplish together.

PLAY THE NAME GAME - While examining critters, avoid answering a child's "What is it?" question. Knowing the name often ends any further investigation. Suggest your child give the critter a name. Encourage closely analyzing and observing characteristics, behaviors, and habitats. The newly coined names can be insightful and sometimes entertaining - the Rotty-log centipede, the Waggly-tail bird, or the squeaky balloon frog. Scientists apply these same principals when classifying living things, naming them in Latin and Greek. This is how we came to have names like Squirrel, from the Greek word *skiouros*. *Skia*, meaning 'shadow', and *oura*, meaning 'tail'. The squirrel was named for its habit of sitting with its bushy tail up over its back and head, sitting in the 'shadow of its tail'.

