



Games and Activities

There are many activities and games which enhance the children's experience of the environment.

The following have been included partly because they require minimal preparation and can be carried out effectively in the open air. But above all, they have been chosen to cater for different kinds of learning and to encourage individual responses to the world around us.

The activities follow sensory themes ;

- **Ways of Looking**
- **Ways of Listening**
- **Ways of Touching**
- **Ways of Imagining**
- **Ways of Creating**
- **Ways of Remembering**

internet resources are listed on the final page.

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Ways of Looking

I AM A CAMERA

Application

Children are guided with closed eyes to develop awareness and trust. The aim is to observe the beauties of nature by short, focused observation.

Season/conditions

Any / dry underfoot

Resources

None

Activity

One player takes the role of photographer and the other plays the camera. The 'photographer' guides the 'camera', who keeps his eyes closed, on a search for beautiful and interesting 'pictures'. When the photographer sees something he likes, he points the 'camera lens' (eyes) at it framing the object he wants to 'shoot'. Tapping the 'camera' on the shoulder opens the shutter, 3-5 seconds later, another tap closes the shutter and the 'picture' is 'taken'.

Unusual views can be obtained by 'pointing the camera' upwards, getting very close to the object or panning the horizon or vertically, as up a tree trunk.

After about 10 'shots' the roles are reversed. The activity may be concluded by choosing one of the most memorable 'shots' and describing it in small groups.

Extension

The favourite 'shot' could be drawn on a small piece of card and shared and key words added.

Sometimes 'snapshots' are remembered for years.

LEAF TICKETS

Application

Focus observational skills particularly prior to a colour walk or a session of environmental art.

Season

Summer or autumn are best when leaves have been 'damaged' or are more varied in colour.

Resources

A small box or bag for the 'tickets'

Activity

Look for an 'entrance ticket' to the wood. The children are told to look very carefully for a distinctive leaf which they will be able to find when put in the ticket box with the others. At the end of the day's session, the children are asked to identify their return ticket home (or stay in the wood!)



Extension

After finding their 'tickets', the children stand in a circle and hold them up to the light. Encourage the children to look at the patterns of veins or animal damage. (e.g. Leaf miners leave worm-like paths.) After a few moments, ask the children to pass their leaves to another child and examine the new leaf. Depending on the size of the group, the children continue passing the leaves until they get their own back or just swap a few more times. Framing the leaf in a cardboard or envelope window 'slide' is even more effective.

ENVIRONMENTAL PALETTES

Application

This is a simple way of selecting and recording visual experiences. The colourful palettes can form the basis of a beautiful display or be used as a stimulus for further art work. Colour, Texture, Camouflage, Diversity are key words.

Season

Each season provides its own variety of colours.

Resources

Small pieces of card approx. (6cm. square.) covered with double sided Sellotape.

Activity

Each child is given a 'palette' and the tape is removed a little at a time. The children are asked to find tiny pieces of natural material to stick on their palettes. The aim is to completely fill the palette with as many colours as possible. Children should be encouraged to share as much as possible so that the minimum of material is collected. Encourage the children to look carefully to find a range of colours from on one plant. Most leaves have different shades on the upper surface from the underneath and may have brightly coloured stems. This activity can be adapted in a number of ways;

- How many different colours can be found?
- Can you make a rainbow of colours (see 'Rainbow Chips' for a link with the story of Noah)?
- How many greens can you find? 20? 1000?
- How many different textures can you find?

Extension

Palettes may be cut as strips to record the collection in sequence and thus represents a journey (see 'mapsticks' in this section.)

RAINBOW CHIPS

Application

This is a colour matching exercise to develop close observational skills and link with Colour, Diversity, Adaptation and Camouflage.

Season

Any

Resources

Colour blocks or strips cut from commercial paint charts (rainbow chips).

Activity

Children are given a rainbow chip and asked to find something which matches it as exactly as possible.

You may wish to collect a rainbow of colours by selecting appropriate 'rainbow chips' and recreating a rainbow for display (on the ground or back at school).

An introduction to this activity which links with the story of Noah may be:

'.....and when the rains stopped, Noah looked up to find a rainbow in the sky. It was a sign from God. The Devil was furious at this and with a curse, shattered the rainbow into tiny fragments. But God said, 'Do not be afraid. If you look around carefully you will find the colours of the rainbow again.....'

Extension

Make a natural mosaic using natural materials as tiles.

Ways of Listening

Application

The following activities are aimed to focus listening and develop listening skills.

Birds are more likely to be heard than seen in the woodland. These activities are a useful preliminary to bird identification. Sound counting is useful as a calming activity or as a way of 'capturing' the woodland experience before returning to school.

SOUND COUNTING

Season

Any but Spring for best birdsong



Activity

The children stand very still in a circle (or lie on their backs) concentrating on their breathing. They are asked to put their fists in the air and with their eyes closed, raise a finger for each different sound they hear. Who heard the most? Could the children identify the sounds?

Extension

Repeat the exercise listening for 'natural sounds', 'different bird songs', etc.

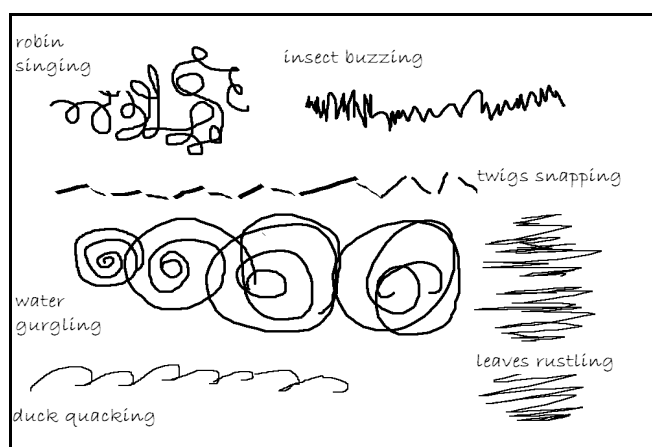
SOUND PICTURES

Resources

Pencils, small cards

Activity

Find a space and spend a few quiet moments listening. (You may wish to play the previous game.) Ask the children to draw a pattern or shape to represent each sound they hear. Share the sound pictures. Can the children recognise sounds from each other's drawings?



Extension

- Map the sounds on the card to show which direction the sounds are coming from.
- Create a musical score by drawing the sounds along lines. Can the children play the music with natural instruments? (Banging stones or sticks together, rustling leaves, etc.) or body sounds (clapping, hissing, tapping)
- Create a woodland symphony – in a circle, each child chooses a sound to reproduce as above. The 'musicians' are brought in, one at a time (or in groups of 'instruments') until the whole group are performing their symphony. Bring the music to a crescendo before a sudden dramatic finish or a slow descent into silence.

Ways of Touching

TREE HUGGING AND BLINDFOLD WALKS

Application

This activity can develop sensory awareness and involves dependence and trust.

Season

Any

Resources

Blindfolds.

Areas of trees, free from nettles and brambles and with even ground.

Choose terrain carefully away from hazards such as water. The children can get excited and fall easily while playing this game. Encourage a calm atmosphere. Make sure all children stay in view.

Activity

Children work in pairs. One child chooses a tree. The child is encouraged to feel, smell and hug the tree for some time so as to familiarise himself with it. He is then blindfolded and disorientated by his partner. He is then led to a number of trees to touch and decide if this was his chosen tree. The roles are then reversed.

Extension

Blindfolded leading walks can be used to heighten the senses. Complete silence should be encouraged to help children appreciate senses other than sight.

A rope tied to two trees may be used to guide the children, in file, around trees and bushes. After the blindfold walk, children may be encouraged to describe their multi-sensory experiences.

TOUCH BOXES

Application

This a structured way of collecting and using language relating to tactile qualities particularly for younger children.

Season

Any

Resources

1 egg box per child or couple

Activity

Each child or couple is given an egg box and is asked to collect 6 (or 12) objects to put in their box. Each object must feel different e.g. Smooth, rough, spiky,rough, soft, hard. On completion, the contents are discussed. The whole group's collection may be sorted into groups on the ground.

<i>Spiky</i>	<i>Knobbly</i>	<i>Hard</i>	<i>Velvety</i>
<i>Smooth</i>	<i>Hard</i>	<i>Soft</i>	<i>Squidgy</i>
<i>Furry</i>	<i>Silky</i>	<i>Rough</i>	<i>Springy</i>

Extension

Tactile words written on small pieces of paper may be placed in the boxes before commencing the collection so that the children are directed to look for specific textures.

- The box might act as a 'story sack'. Each child tells (or writes) a story which includes each of the items.
- Words could reflect other qualities: straight / curved ,dull / shiny.

Ways of Imagining

3 STAGES TO DISAPPEARING

Application

This activity reinforces the understanding of camouflage by considering shape rather than colour.

Season Any

Resources None. Choose an area not too close to water.

Activity

The adults spread out around the perimeter of an area containing trees and bushes. The children are instructed not to go beyond the adults. They are then asked to take three steps and try to blend into their surroundings by assuming the shape of a nearby bush, tree or log. This is repeated on counting three more steps, then three more. At this point, the children should have totally 'disappeared'. Gather the children together to discuss whose camouflage was the most effective and why.

Story Sack

Application

This is a variation on the above activity. All children love to collect 'Treasures' from a walk and these can act as a stimulus for story telling and writing.

Resources

Small bags for collecting. So much more value is added to the collection if these are purpose made rather than old plastic carrier bags!

Activity

After collecting a number of interesting objects during the visit, each child is asked to weave their items into a story to tell a partner.

TELLING TALES

Application

This activity provides an opportunity to look and compare pattern and shape in nature. By 'Telling Tales' the children have a chance to be as imaginative as they wish or to incorporate their knowledge of e.g. Food chains, life cycles or adaptation.

Season

Any

Resources

None

Activity

Collect an interesting shaped stick, beautifully coloured leaf or some other object with which you can focus the children's attention. Show the children what you have found and ask them what they think it looks like. Suggest different responses in the way you hold or move the object. For example, a small branch may look like an antler. Ask the children, 'if this were an antler, how did it get here?' Encourage the children to add to the story. Now, the children are going to explore the nearby woodland for a few minutes till they find something really interesting. It may be a scrap of golden cloth or a piece of flying carpet (a beautifully coloured leaf) the fossilised egg of a dinosaur which roamed the area around Marshall's Arm (a smooth stone) etc. When the children have had time to examine and imagine, they find someone to tell their story to. The listener responds with their story.

Extension

Can a small group of children blend their stories and tell the new story to the rest of the group using the objects as props?

Ways of Creating

THE GREAT CIRCLE

Application

This is not only a colour exercise but also reinforces identification by matching. Concentric rings of natural material are drawn on the woodland floor using natural materials. (See Andy Goldsworthy websites and Tim Pugh illustrations)

Season spring, summer, autumn

Resources found materials

Activity

Find a clear patch of ground. The teacher holds up and names a piece of natural material (e.g. An oak leaf) and asks a number of children in the group to find something identical. These objects are then placed on the ground in a circle. The teacher then repeats the exercise with another object and another circle is made around the first. This is repeated until the group feels that the piece is completed. It is left for passers by to enjoy.

Extension

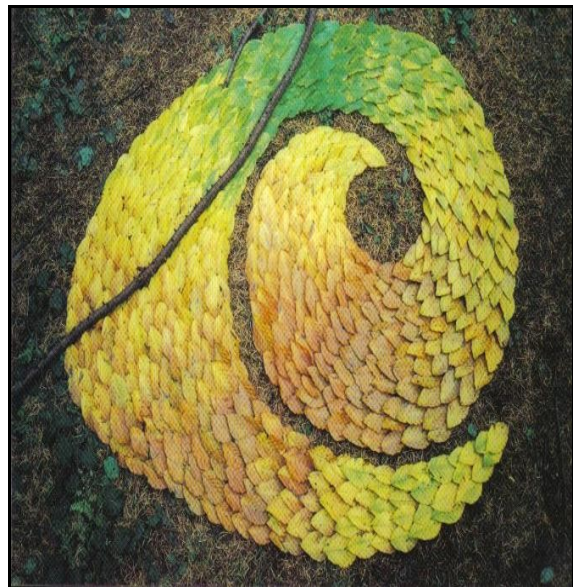
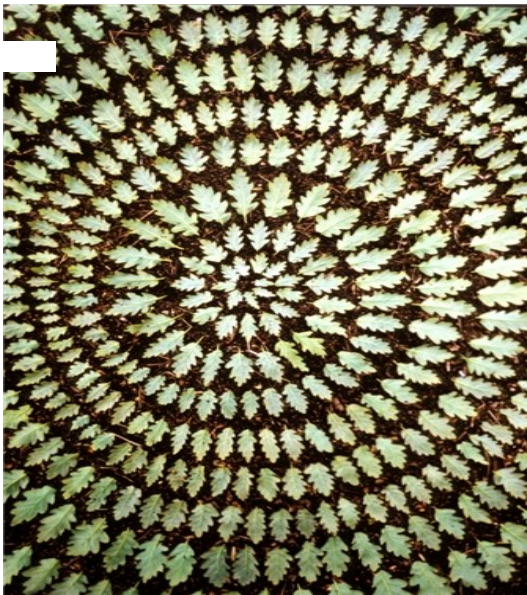
This time a colour line is to be created using leaves. The teacher chooses two leaves (say yellow and brown) and places them on the ground about three metres apart. The children find other leaves and add them to the line, one at a time so as to produce a spectrum of colours from green to brown or pale green to darkest green in spring and summer. The children comment on the positioning.

The lines can be made to meander around the ground or can be pinned together with stems and suspended from trees.



Natural Art

courtesy of Tim Pugh



MINIBEAST MODELLING

Application

If carried out after observing minibeasts this reinforces identification and understanding.

Season

Especially Spring or Summer if looking at minibeasts first.)

Resources

None.

The following information on numbers of legs may be useful:
Insects (6) Spiders (8) Woodlice (14) Centipedes (30-one pair on most segments) Millipedes (30+ - two pairs per segment but none on first four)

Activity

The children collect twigs, leaves and stones to recreate a chosen minibeast on the woodland floor. The intention is to be as accurate as possible with the number of wings, body parts etc.



Extension

The children create their own minibeasts and name them. On a 'gallery tour' each child explains the shape (big mandibles because it is a carnivore, etc.) and habitat.

MINIBEAST STATUES

As for minibeast modelling but using the children instead of natural materials! Start with individuals then groups of children.

Extension

Make the statues move with Minibeast Hop!

MINIBEAST HOP

Application

When the children have discovered some minibeasts ask them to look at the way the insects move.

Season Any

Resources Possibly a long rope.

Activity

After looking closely at some insects ask groups of 3 children to hold waists a rope. Then ask them to move like an insect. When they have tried, discuss how to make their movement more effective and try again. Several 'insects' might have a race. Whose technique is most successful? Is it the same or different from the technique of an insect? Try again, but this time select a different type of minibeast e.g. a woodlouse (14 legs) or a millipede! This will need a lot of legs, teamwork, good observation and a sense of humour!



Ways of Remembering

LEAF SCRAMBLE

Application

This is an excellent game to consolidate identification skills.

Season

Any

Resources

A selection of leaves, winter twigs or wildflowers. (Only pick one of each and only where a great number exists. Reinforce with children the need to *protect* the countryside.) Numbered cards (1-15) in two colours. Pieces of white paper or white trays are useful to make the leaves etc. stand out. Choose an area which is even underfoot.

Activity

This is a variation on 'Dog and Bone'. Divide the children into two groups and number them (if using cards, shuffle and distribute). Each group should have the same numbers. The two groups line up about 2-3 metres apart. About 6 leaves (for example) are spread out between the lines whilst reminding the children of the names of the species. The name of the species is called out followed by a number. (e.g. Sycamore 5) The two children numbered 5 try to find the sycamore leaf and hold it up when they have done so, scoring a point for their team. Continue until all children have had a turn.

Variations

Minibeast scramble; Use enlarged, laminated minibeast pictures. *(see BBSRC website on last page)*

Habitat scramble ; Teams represent different habitats and on the call of a number, those children select an appropriate animal to hand to their team leader (or put in a tray) Collections are then checked.

MAPSTICKS

The following description is adapted from, Gordon MacLellan's inspirational book, 'Talking to the Earth'. See the Resources section for further details.

Application

This activity presents an opportunity to record a journey using the natural materials found along the way. Each mapstick records individual experiences rather than the fixed arrangement of symbols common to formal maps.

Season

Any

Resources

Scissors, differently coloured wool rolled into lots of small balls.

Activity

The children collect exciting mementoes of their journey and an interesting stick to tie them on to. On returning back to base, the items are put in the order in which they were found and then bound tightly using an appropriately coloured wool.

Afterwards, the children share their journeys by 'reading' their mapsticks to each other.

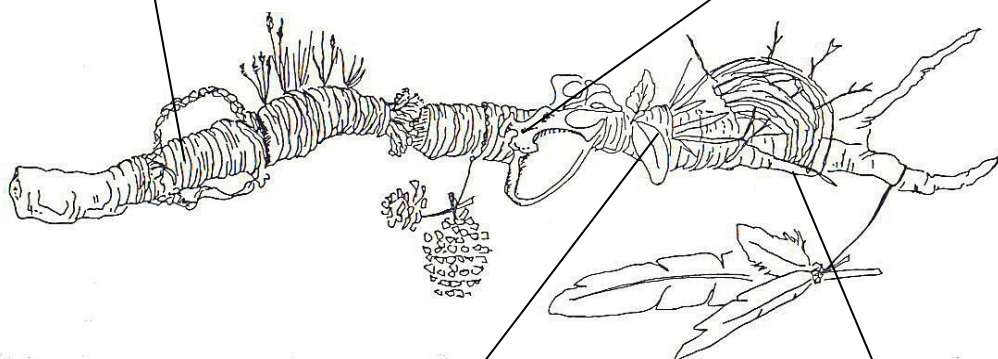
Variations

Different groups explore different parts of the site. The mapsticks can then be part of a display which maps the whole site in a three dimensional, story based interpretation rather than a flat diagrammatic representation.

A Mapstick Story

1. **My journey began by a pond with rushes growing round.
(blue wool with plaited rushes making a pond shape.)**

2. **Moving on, I walked over bare earth in a wood of alder and birch trees. There were holes among the tree-roots where I found a rabbit bone.
(brown and black wool, alder cones and birch leaves)**



3. **At the end of my walk I came onto a field without a path and there stopped.
(green wool with grass woven into it)**

4. **I took this walk in the early morning. The sky was clear and blue, birds were singing and the sun was rising.
(pale blue wool, feathers and an orange and yellow 'sun' weaving)**

INTERNET RESOURCES

GENERAL WILDLIFE

<http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk>

Excellent pictures, games and activities on all kinds of wildlife. Seasonal activity packs.

MINIBEASTS

[http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/society/schools/primary/real-
bugs.aspx](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/society/schools/primary/real-
bugs.aspx)

Minibeast pictures, games, puppets and even a play.

[http://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/educational/
pond_resources/ponds_teachingideas.php](http://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/educational/
pond_resources/ponds_teachingideas.php)

Pond bingo – cards with illustrations of pondlife

[http://www.wow4water.net/grownups/resources/
category/habitats](http://www.wow4water.net/grownups/resources/
category/habitats)

Information and activities on freshwater habitats