

Meet a Tree



Time: 15 - 20 minutes

Age: 6+

Aim: To explore the countryside using touch & discover that trees are different

Safety First:

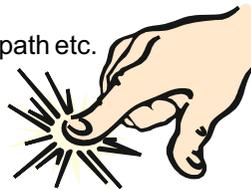
- Beware of children moving too fast.
- Emphasize the responsibilities of the seeing partner - walk slowly, look for dangers, guide not drag.
- **LOOK** for rabbit holes, logs, nettles and overhanging branches.
- Blindfolded children need to keep their arms out in front of them.
- Wash hands before eating.
- Explain where the children can/cannot go - up to that tree/path etc.

Equipment:

- 1 blindfold between 2 children.
- Needs plenty of adult supervisors.

How to:

- Choose a site which has several sorts of trees of varying sizes, and is relatively clear under-foot.
- Ask the children how we know we are surrounded by trees, ie. what makes a tree a tree? roots, trunk, bark, branches, leaves, large. Then ask how we can tell one type of tree from another - bark, leaves, shape.
- Split the children into pairs and give out blindfolds
- Explain that the aim is to discover enough about a tree using touch & smell only so that they are able to identify the tree again once the blindfold is removed.
- Explain they should consider the feel of the bark, whether it has branches or twigs, can they feel the roots, can they get their arms around it (give it a hug!) etc. **Use a tree to demonstrate these actions to the children.**
- Remind the seeing partner about safety. They must move slowly, always holding their partner by the shoulders and must warn of rabbit holes or logs under foot and branches and twigs above. The blind-folded child needs to keep their arms out in front of them so they don't bump into the tree.
- Let the seeing partner slowly lead their blindfolded friend (in a roundabout route!) to a tree and allow them to explore it with their hands **ALWAYS** remaining aware of any dangers.
- Prompt the children to feel, smell, investigate twigs and roots etc.
- Lead the partner back to where they started in a roundabout way, twist them around slowly to disorientate them, then remove blindfold and ask them to find their tree. The seeing partner remains still, saying nothing unless it is obvious their partner is struggling.
- Repeat the process by swapping roles.



Minibeast hunting (grassland)



Time: 20 - 30+ minutes

Age: Minimum 5 (younger if closely supervised)

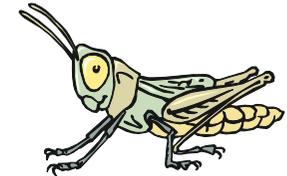
Aim: Increase observation skills & introduce identification skills & keys

Safety First:

- Warn the children about wasps and bees.
- Wash hands before eating.
- Explain where the children can and cannot go - up to that tree/path etc.

Equipment:

- Identification charts.
- Collecting pots.
- Magnifying glasses, note pads and pencils (if required).
- Sweep nets - if available.
- White "shaking sheets".



How to mini-beast hunt in long grass & flowers:

- Explain that insects may be found on stems, on or under leaves, on or under petals, as well as on the flower head.
- Emphasise the aim is to look carefully allowing other children to see the animal in its natural state, fast movements may scare them away!
- Minibeasts can be carefully persuaded into a pot for further examination and identification once observed in the field. Ensure the children do not shake the pots.
- Alternatively, children can gently shake clumps of grass over a white sheet to dislodge the minibeasts. Do not pick the grass/flower.
- Replace the minibeasts carefully to the same place they were found (on a flower etc.)

How to use the sweep net:

- Show the children how to carry the nets by their sides with the net end upwards so they do not drag on the ground or hit other children.
- Demonstrate the correct use i.e. gentle sweep through the grass, then keep the bag folded over the frame so the minibeasts do not fly out. **Do not use the nets to catch butterflies, dragonflies or damselflies as they are very delicate and will be hurt.**
- Gently persuade the minibeasts into a pot for identification.
- Allow the children to share the use of the nets, supervise carefully.
- Help the children to identify the creatures using identification charts.
- Replace the minibeasts carefully.

Discuss:

- Sort mini-beasts in groups; those with no legs, six legs, eight legs, hard shells, wings, etc. (All insects have 6 legs, all spiders have 8)
- Draw the minibeasts.
- Name an insect and label it's main body-parts; head, thorax, abdomen, antenna, wings, legs, eye, etc.