

Experience Guide

Theme: Nature

Early Language and Literacy Success: Toddler Toolkit

Nemours Children's Reading BrightStart!

SAMPLE

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Language Builder



SAMPLE

Language Builder: Discovery Time

Title: Nature Discovery

Learning Focus: Joint Attention; Sensory Exploration; Exploration; Discovery

Prep Time: 2-3 minutes

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe the nature items (round, green)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (rock, leaf)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (reach, dig)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Discovery Bin (bin or basket)
- Sand
- Nature items (rock, leaf, twigs, bark, shell)

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that encourage investigation.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Grab the sand with both hands and slowly let it fall back down into the Discovery Bin.)

Discovery time! Let's look and see.

Discovery time for you and me!

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

I see you peeking inside the Discovery Bin.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials or objects.

Look at this sand! Would you like to reach inside and play?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What do you think we will find inside?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler's response. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

A beach! You are smart. We find shells in the sand at the beach.

You might find a shell, keep searching.

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Follow the direction of play to follow their interests.

You are reaching the sand back and forth in your hands.

You must like the way that rough, grainy sand feels.

Language Development

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, using descriptive language.

I am digging with my hands and fingers in the rough, grainy sand. Dig, dig, dig!

I am picking up a smooth, round rock.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say /r/ ... /r/ ... round rock?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

Sand is covering this round rock.

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

I am using my fingers to dust off the round rock.

It feels bumpy. Would you like to touch and feel the bumpy rock?

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Select safe, age-appropriate and exciting objects to promote exploration of nature among toddlers. If you do not have the materials suggested for this experience, go outside and gather different items found in nature. Select stimulating materials for toddlers to touch, hold and squeeze as hands-on, multisensory learning is ideal when introducing toddlers to new concepts and materials. Place the selected items in the Discovery Bin, covered with sand and prompt toddlers to use their imaginations as you touch and explore together. Be enthusiastic! Your smile and tone of voice will create excitement in this indoor or outdoor experience.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

Rocks form mountains. Mountains are big, big rocks that reach up to the sky.

Create personal connections for toddlers as you relate the prop, object or material to their lives or previous experiences.

(Toddler's name), you have been to the big, tall mountains.

You went on a trip to the mountains with your family.

Use descriptive language as you name or label the object or material selected by the toddler. Be sure to connect the material to the book, concept or theme.

I see you looking back inside the Discovery Bin. Let's find another rock and build a tall, rocky mountain together.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Reach inside and dig around. Look for another rock that is bumpy and round.

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

Gasp! You've found a big, round rock.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Promote hand-eye coordination through simple hand and finger play.

Let's use our hands to touch the small rock on top of the big rock.

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: The Bear Went Over the Mountain

*We are building a mountain!
A tall and rocky mountain.
We are building a mountain!
How tall will it be?*

Great stacking! Our mountain is two rocks high.

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

Let's stand up and reach high ... high ... high for the tallest mountain.

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

Watch me stretch my body and reach up high.

Can you do it, too?

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- For younger toddlers, place fewer nature items inside the Discovery Bin. Describe each one as they find it. Point out similarities and differences.
- If toddlers do not like sand, substitute shredded paper or other sensory materials, encouraging them to search and discover new objects.

For Older Toddlers

- Encourage toddlers to label the nature item. If they need assistance, label the item and encourage them to repeat the word.
- Add more nature items to the Discovery Bin. Have toddlers sort like items by size, texture or shape.
- Describe the features of all the nature items and encourage toddlers to find them.

Extend the Experience

- Add small brushes, spoons or sand toys for the toddlers to use to dig for nature items.
- Reproduce and cut one set of Small Nature Photograph Cards and encourage toddlers to match the nature item to its photograph.

Cognitive Development

Prompt toddlers to engage in matching, sorting or classifying of props, objects or materials.

First, we found round rocks. Now, let's see if we can find another nature item.

You can dig in the sand with me.

Is this green leaf a nature item? Yes, green leaves are part of nature!

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

Where do we find leaves? Pause.

Green leaves grow on bushes and trees.

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, size, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

This green leaf is flat and smooth. The rocks were round and bumpy. Can you feel the difference?

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

When leaves fall from the trees they float down ... down ... down to the ground.

Watch me hold this leaf up high and drop it.

It is falling!

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Would you like to hold this leaf up high and drop it like me?

Allow toddlers to move freely as they develop body, spatial and perceptual awareness.

I like the way you are standing up to drop the leaf down ... down ... down.

It felt so tall and fell so fast!

Social and Emotional Development

Provide opportunities to for toddlers **demonstrate** their growing **understanding of emotions**.

What happens if I scoop up a little sand and drop it on your hands?

Gasp! You giggle and smile!

Create a positive learning environment. Smile and laugh as you pretend and play together.

Digging in the sand with you is so much fun!

Use a warm tone of voice to comfort toddlers while acknowledging emotions.

Look at you reaching back inside my Discovery Bin. You are excited to explore these new nature items.

Language Builder: Super Searcher

Title: **I Spy the Sun, I Spy the Moon**

Learning Focus: Joint Attention; Sensory Exploration; Object Permanence; Similarities and Differences; Math: Matching, Sorting or Classifying; Imitation

Prep Time: 3-5 minutes

Estimated Time: 5-7 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Interesting words used to describe objects (fluffy, shiny)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (cloud, star)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (float, twinkle)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Craft supplies (scissors, construction paper, glue, aluminum foil, cotton balls)
- Reproducible: Sky Photograph Cards
- Reproducible: Moon
- Reproducible: Stars
- Reproducible: Clouds
- Reproducible: Sun
- Basket

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that encourage investigation.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Place your hands over your brow as you pretend to search for something.)

Something is hiding. Something is hiding.

What can it be? What can it be?

Somewhere in the classroom! Somewhere in the classroom!

Let's look and see! Let's look and see!

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

I see you looking up and looking down, (toddler's name).

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

I can see you are ready to search. Would you like to explore together?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What do you think we will find? Where should we look first?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

You are pointing toward the blocks. Let's investigate!

Be flexible. Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I like the way you are pulling the blocks off the shelf, one by one.

Language Development

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

Whisper! I spy something white and fluffy! Do you see it, too?

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

This is a fluffy, white cloud. It feels soft and fuzzy.

Narrate the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

You are rubbing your fingers on the fluffy, white cloud. Back and forth, back and forth.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say /f/ ... /f/ ... fluffy cloud?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

Yes! These are fluffy clouds from the sky.

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Using the craft supplies, create a bright yellow sun from construction paper, textured clouds from cotton balls, a moon and textured stars using shiny foil. Get creative! Using hands-on, multisensory learning when introducing toddlers to new concepts and materials is ideal. Be sure to talk about the way the sun, stars, moon and clouds look and feel. If you do not have access to materials to create these items, use the reproducible images provided. Hide these items around the classroom and encourage toddlers to search for them. As you invite toddlers to search for the hidden moon, sun, stars and clouds, create a playful experience with songs and chants. As toddlers find each object, share your enthusiasm for their accomplishments by acknowledging their actions and using facial expressions that match your excitement.

Clarify meaning of new word(s) using clear, simple language.

Clouds float high in the sky. Sometimes they are white and sometimes they are gray.

Clouds change shape and color as they float by.

Watch for eye gazing, pointing or vocalization to indicate the toddler is showing interest in a prop, object or material. Add comments, details or extended language to your observation.

I see you looking all around.

Let's put these clouds in the basket and go find something else that floats high up in the sky!

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

We see stars floating in the sky. Can you help me find a star?

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Search, search, search with me

I'm looking near and far.

Look all around the room.

We're searching for a star.

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

I like the way you're moving around the room and searching with your bright, (color) eyes.

Gasp! You've found a star.

Cognitive Development

Introduce mathematical concepts such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

You've found a shiny star with so many points. Let's touch and count the points on this star together.

One ... two ... three ... four ... five shiny points.

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

Stars twinkle in the night.

They give us light in the dark sky!

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Watch me use my fingers to twinkle, twinkle. Twinkle ... twinkle. Hold your hands up and wiggle your fingers.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Can you twinkle, twinkle like me?

Initiate simple experiments and investigations to see how things work.

Do you think we can see the stars in the sky now?

Let's look out the window and see.

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Hide the nature items in a smaller area of the classroom so they are easier for toddlers to find.
- Encourage toddlers to repeat the name of the nature item as you say it.

For Older Toddlers

- Hide the nature items throughout the classroom so the older toddlers must move all around to find them.
- After finding all of the items, encourage toddlers to hide them around the room for a classmate to find.

Extend the Experience

- Reproduce and cut one set of Sky Photograph Cards. One will be a daytime sky and the other a nighttime sky. As the toddlers find nature items, match them to the photograph of the correct sky (i.e., stars and moon are found in the nighttime sky).

Demonstrate how objects or materials fit together or work together in different ways.

We can't see the star in the sky because it is daytime. When it's light outside, stars are hidden. Watch me hide this shiny star behind my back. Pause. Here it is.

Encourage toddlers to use props, objects or materials in a playful way, with an intended purpose.

Can you hide this star behind your back?

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

Drop this star into the basket with the cloud.

Assist or support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

Now, let's pretend to catch a star.

Jump up and reach for the stars in the sky with me. Jump and reach. Jump and reach.

Social and Emotional Development

Create a sense of belonging by initiating positive interactions and relationships with peers and caregivers.

I spy something we see high in the sky. It is hiding in our Book Basket.

Let's invite a friend to help us look.

Increase confidence by acknowledging the actions or responses of the toddler.

I see two friends searching in the Book Basket together, pulling out books one by one.

Observe and acknowledge the reactions of each toddler. Demonstrate awareness and responsiveness to the needs of the toddler.

You've found it! I can tell you are both feeling excited that you've found the bright, golden sun.

We are having so much fun searching for things we see floating high in the sky.

When the toddler is interested, continue searching until all nature items have been explored.

Language Builder: Language Starter

Title: Pictures of Nature

Learning Focus: Conversation; Vocabulary Development; Print Awareness; Sensory Exploration; Fine Motor: Hands-On Exploration

Prep Time: 2-3 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Use interesting words to describe the pictures (green, long, prickly)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (grass, insect, grasshopper)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (hop, buzz, fly)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Reproducible: Insect Photograph Cards (bumblebee, grasshopper, butterfly, ladybug, firefly, ant)
- Reproducible: Green Grass (from Large Nature Photograph Cards)
- Basket

Experience Starter

Select a high contrast photograph or a real-life prop or object that encourages investigation.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Gently shake basket back and forth in your hands to engage the interest of the toddlers.)

Pictures, pictures, everywhere!

Some are here and some are there.

Can you pick one for us to share?

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

I see you looking at all the pictures in the basket.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

There are so many colorful pictures

Would you like to choose one?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What do you think we will play in the photographs.

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

That is right! This is a picture of green grass.

Be flexible. Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I like the way you are rubbing your finger on the picture of the green grass.

Language Development

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

/g/ ... /g/ ... green /g/ ... /g/ ... grass. Can you say that with me?

Green grass!

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

You said that so nicely. There is so much green grass in this picture.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

Green grass is a plant that covers the ground. Some grass is soft and other grass can be prickly.

Create personal connections for toddlers as you relate the prop, object or material to their lives or previous experiences.

We sat in the green grass on the playground while we were playing outside yesterday.

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

Grass grows in tiny lines called blades.

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Reproduce, cut and laminate one set of Insect Photograph Cards and gather the image of green grass from the Large Nature Photograph Cards. Place the cards inside the basket and use your enthusiasm to engage the interest of the toddlers. Introduce each photograph, describing the specific features, similarities and differences. As you integrate hands-on learning during this experience, invite each toddler to choose an insect from the basket. Encourage them to tell you what they see in the photograph.

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, using descriptive language.

*I am tracing each long, green grass blade with my finger.
Green grass, green grass, everywhere!*

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

There are still so many pictures to explore. Would you like to pick another one?

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

Oh, my! This is a picture of a big, green grasshopper.

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner as you embed learning opportunities.

A grasshopper is an insect. Sometimes we call them bugs!

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

*Where can we find insects? Pause
Insects live in nature. We find them in the grass, trees and dirt.
They crawl, hop, and fly!*

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

This grasshopper is the same color as the grass. They are both green!

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

*Grasshoppers like to hop. Watch me hop this picture of a grasshopper into the basket.
Hop, hop, hop.*

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Would you like to try to hop the grasshopper into the basket, like me?

Prompt toddlers to engage in matching, sorting or classifying of props, objects or materials.

*Can you look at the pictures in the basket and find another insect?
Is this tree an insect? No!
Is this an insect? Yes!*

Encourage toddlers to imitate the actions of others.

*This is a bumble bee. They buzz ... buzz ... buzz through the air.
Can you buzz, too?*

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Spread the Insect Photograph Cards around the learning area, close enough so they can see each card but far enough to encourage movement. As you describe an insect or nature item, encourage toddlers to find the picture.

For Older Toddlers

- Hide the Insect Photograph Cards around the room. Encourage toddlers to find a card and bring it back to you so you can describe the insect.

Extend the Experience

- Create a second set of Insect Photograph Cards to play a matching game. Hide one set of cards around the room. Invite toddlers to choose a card and move in search of the photograph.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

Bees use their wings to fly.

Watch me use my arms to balance and fly like a bumblebee.

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

I like the way you are flapping your arms like wings, too.

Can you flap them quickly? Pause.

Now, flap them slow ... ly.

Social and Emotional Development

Invite toddlers to connect to peers during play and exploration.

Look at (toddler's name) watching you buzz like a bee.

Let's ask her to come and move like a bee too.

Identify the toddler's feelings and express empathy with appropriate language.

I see a big smile on her face. She is feeling happy to buzz like a bee with you.

Let's give her a friendly high five!

Increase awareness of self-identity by referring to the toddler by name.

(Toddler's name) and (toddler's name) are buzzing like bees.

Language Builder: Walk and Talk!

Title: Nature Walk

Learning Focus: Joint Attention;
Conversation; Vocabulary Development;
Sensory Exploration; Perceptual Information;
Fine Motor: Hands-On Exploration

Prep Time: 2-3 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe nature objects and photographs (big, blue)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (ocean, leaves)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (blow, rake)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Reproducible: Large Nature Photograph Cards
- Sensory nature items (items from nature represented in the large photographs, i.e., seashells, leaves, etc.)
- Basket

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that encourage investigation.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Shake your basket of sensory nature items as you sing or chant the words below.)

Nature here and nature there. I see nature everywhere!

Nature, nature, all around. Let's explore to see what we've found!

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

Gasp! Look at you coming to see what nature items I have inside this basket.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

Oh, my! This is a seashell. Would you like to use your fingers to feel the bumpy shell?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What do you think we can do with this seashell?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler's response. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

That is right! The beach on the ocean is full of beautiful shells.

Let's look around at these pictures on the wall and see if we can find the beach.

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Follow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I like how you are holding onto the seashell.

I will carry the basket and you carry the seashell as we walk and talk about nature.

Language Development

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

See a picture with sand and waves across the room. That must be a picture of the beach.

Let's investigate!

Narrate and describe the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

I am touching the soft, white sand with my fingers.

Now, I am touching the wavy, blue water.

Clarify meaning of new word(s) using clear, simple language.

The wavy, blue water is the ocean.

The waves are salty and go up and down, up and down.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say big ocean?

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Reproduce one set of the large Nature Photograph Cards and hang them in various indoor or outdoor locations. Gather the recommended sensory nature items and place them in a basket. Engage toddlers in a fun matching game as you explore nature together. Walk from photograph to photograph, exploring the different places you see. Create excitement during the walk as you integrate hands-on, multisensory learning. Invite toddlers to choose a sensory nature item from the basket and match it to the nature location where it can be found.

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

Many different animals live in the big ocean.

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

Look! I have a small bag of sand inside my basket.

Let's feel the soft, white sand together.

Watch for eye gazing, pointing or vocalization to indicate the toddler is showing interest in a prop, object or material. Add comments, details or extended language to your observation.

I see you looking inside my basket. Go ahead and reach inside.

Will you find something else from the beach?

Sensory Experience

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

Oh! You've found so many big, green leaves.

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Rub this leaf with your fingers. It feels smooth.

Cognitive Development

Initiate simple experiments and investigations to see how things work.

Do you think these leaves came from the beach? Pause.

Are there any trees in this picture of the beach?

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

No! We find leaves on bushes and trees in the forest.

Encourage toddlers to search for hidden or missing props, objects or materials as you provide gestures, hints or clues to help them locate it.

Look around the room. Do you see a picture of a forest?

You will see many green leaves on trees.

Invite the toddler to mimic your actions or repeat the toddler's actions.

I see the forest way over there.

Can you walk quickly like me?

Introduce mathematical concepts, such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

There are so many trees in this picture. Some are short trees and some are tall trees.

Count them with me. One ... two ... three ... four ... five ... six ... seven ... eight ... nine ... ten trees in the forest.

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Provide one nature item that represents one nature location. Assist the toddler as they match the item to its location in nature.

For Older Toddlers

- Provide several nature items in the basket. As you pull them out, encourage the toddler to determine their location in nature.

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Leaves, like these, grow on trees. Sometimes they fall to the ground.

We can use a rake and rake them into a pile. Watch me use my hand to rake these leaves into a pile.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Can you use your hands to rake these leaves?

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Assist or support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

Sometimes the wind blows leaves off the trees.

Let's stand and pretend to blow the leaves off of the trees in the forest. Blow the leaves.

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, up, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

Could we pretend to shake the leaves off the trees, too? Pause...

Shake ... shake ... shake.

Social and Emotional Development

Invite toddlers to observe expressions of peers by acknowledging feelings of others.

Look at (toddler's name) peeking into my basket. Her face tells me she is feeling curious.

She's wondering what she will find in my basket.

Respond to feelings of toddlers by labeling the emotion and its cause.

I see a big smile on your face! Reaching into the basket makes you feel happy!

Use the toddler's name and respectful language.

Thank you! Reach back inside my basket.

Thank you, (toddler's name) for playing so nicely with me and your friend, (friend's name) today.

Book Experience

B

SAMPLE

Book Experience: Book Look

Title: **I See Nature Everywhere!**

Learning Focus: Increased Confidence; Focused Attention; Joint Attention; Book Handling Skills; Discovery; Fine Motor: Grasp and Reach

Prep Time: 2-3 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe nature (white, puffy)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (cloud, rain)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (falling)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Book Basket (bin or basket)

Select Books

- Books with high contrast photographs and illustrations of different nature objects

Suggested Titles

- *National Geographic Kids Look and Learn: Look Outside!* – National Geographic Kids
- *National Geographic Kids Look and Learn: Bugs* – National Geographic Kids

Experience Starter

Select a variety of books that relate to the theme or concept of nature. Be sure to include books with high contrast photographs or illustrations of nature.

Initiate interactions by showing the Book Basket in an interesting way. (Place your hands over your brow and pretend to search for something.)

I am looking. I am looking.

For our books. For our books.

Can you find them? Can you find them?

Let's go look! Let's go look!

Show genuine excitement and interest for the books as you model book handling skills.

I am looking over here, and I am looking over there. I am looking in this basket.

Here they are! Our books are in this basket!

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the books.

I see many books inside the basket today. I wonder what these books are about.

Would you like to explore with me?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the books.

What will we see inside with our eyes?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

I see you reaching inside the Book Basket. I can tell you are excited to look at these books today.

Ask permission to read the book before acting on your decision to read. Be aware of cues and body language.

Would you like to open these books and read with me?

Literacy Development

Direct the toddler's attention to a photograph, image or word.

Look at the picture on the front of this book. It's upside down.

We can't read a book upside down. That is silly!

Demonstrate book handling skills, inviting toddlers to handle books with you.

Watch how I turn the book until it is right side up so we can read the words and see the pictures.

Invite the toddler to mimic your action, touching the photograph, image or word.

Would you like to try turning the book like me? Pause.

Turn ... turn ... turn. The picture is right side up again.

Let's explore this book together.

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Gather four to five books, in a variety of genres, related to the theme of nature, and place them in a Book Basket. Choose books with brightly colored photographs or illustrations. We recommend interactive flap books, cloth or plastic books and books that have sounds or different textures. Include books that are sturdy and safe for toddlers to handle. Sit closely with the toddler as you look at the books together. Introduce different objects found in the book, demonstrating book handling skills. Use a tone of voice that helps toddlers hear your excitement for reading.

Language Development

Watch for eye gazing, pointing or vocalization to indicate the toddler is showing interest in a prop, object or material. Add comments, details or extended language to your observation.

Look at the fluffy, white clouds in this book. I see the bright, golden sun in that book.

These books must all be about nature.

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

I am tapping these fluffy, white clouds. Can you tap the fluffy, white clouds, too?

Narrate and describe the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

You are moving your finger around and around the fluffy, white cloud.

Clarify meaning of new word(s) using clear, simple language.

Clouds float high in the sky. Sometimes they are white and sometimes they are gray.

Rain and snow come from clouds in the sky.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

The white puffy clouds are floating by the golden sun. Can you say golden sun?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalization or gestures using complete sentences.

The golden sun is big and round. Let's trace it with our finger.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

The golden sun shines so bright and gives us light during the day.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Encourage toddlers to reach and grasp with hands and fingers as they explore the prop, object or material.

Let's pretend to reach into the book and pull out the bright, golden sun with our fingers.

Pull ... pull ... pull!

Encourage and support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

Let's stand up and toss, toss, toss the golden sun high up in the sky.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Where can we see more nature?

Yes, in our book! Go ahead and turn the page!

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

You did it! Nice job turning the page.

Look at all the cool, pouring rain coming down on this page.

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Encourage toddlers to select the book independently from the Book Basket. Follow their lead and talk about the pages where they stop and pause as they turn.
- Name the item on the page as you model how to touch the matching picture and then encourage the toddler to touch the picture. Use hand over hand assistance to help the toddler.

For Older Toddlers

- Encourage the toddler to name the nature item seen within the pages of the book.
- Name a nature item and encourage the toddler to find that nature item in the book independently.

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

This is a picture of rain falling on the green grass. Rain ... rain ... rain!

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

The rain in this photograph is falling, falling, falling from the sky.

Watch me wiggle my fingers from the sky to the floor like rain.

Drip ... drip. Drip ... drip.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Can you make rain with your little, wiggly fingers, too?

Drip ... drip. Drip ... drip.

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

Why do you think rain is an important part of nature? Pause.

The grass and trees need water to grow. The rain gives them all the water they need.

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Rain, rain, falling down.

Falling from the sky.

Drip ... drip. Drip ... drip.

The grass is not so dry.

Encourage toddlers to search for hidden or missing props, objects or materials as you provide gestures, hints or clues to help them locate it.

I think there is a rainbow hiding somewhere in my book. Can you help me find it?

A rainbow is a colorful arch we see in the sky after it rains.

Demonstrate how objects or materials fit together or work together in different ways.

Watch me turn the pages and search for the colorful rainbow.

Encourage toddlers to use props, objects or materials in a playful way, with an intended purpose.

Can you turn the pages and peek?

Turn ... turn ... turn.

Gasp! You've found the hidden rainbow.

Introduce mathematical concepts such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

Look at these bright colors in this rainbow.

Let's count them. One ... two ... three ... four ... five ... six ... seven bright colors.

Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet!

Social and Emotional Development

Invite toddlers to observe expressions of peers by acknowledging feelings of others.

Our friend, (friend's name) is having so much fun turning the pages and looking at pictures of nature today!

Looking at books makes him feel excited!

Observe and acknowledge the reactions of each toddler. Demonstrate awareness and responsiveness to the needs of the toddler.

Look at the smile on your face! Reading books makes you feel happy, too!

Use the toddler's name and respectful language.

Thank you, (toddler's name), for looking at the books with me today. It makes me happy!

SAMPLE

Book Experience: Talk and Read Together

Title: **Our Favorite Things in Nature**

Learning Focus: Positive Relationships; Focused Attention; Curiosity; Joint Attention; Conversation; Book Handling Skills; Exploration; Perceptual Information

Prep Time: 5-7 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe nature (high, cool)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (mountain, lake)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (climb, swim)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Personal photographs (of toddlers and their favorite nature item)
- Child-safe photo album
- Book Basket (bin or basket)

Select Books

- Self-made books (with personal photographs of familiar peers and familiar nature items)

Suggested Titles

- *On the Night You Were Born* (Board Book) – Nancy Tillman
- *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me* – Eric Carle

Experience Starter

Select a variety of books that relate to the theme or concept of nature. Be sure to include books with high contrast photographs and self-made books filled with images of familiar people and nature.

Initiate interactions by showing the Book Basket in an interesting way. (Pat your hands on the sides of your Book Basket as you sing or chant the words below.)

Big books, little books, what is inside?

Come look and see what we find!

Show genuine excitement and interest for the books as you model book handling skills.

Oh, my! You've found a book! Let's look together to see what it is about.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the books.

Let's look at the front cover of the book. It is a picture of the ocean.

There is blue water and green land. Would you like to explore the book together?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the books.

I see many faces all around the earth. Do you recognize any of these sweet faces?

Whose sweet faces will we see together?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

I see you pointing to a picture of our friend, (friend's name). This must be our classroom book about nature.

Ask permission to read the book before acting on your decision to read. Be aware of cues and body language.

Would you like to read this book together?

Literacy Development

Direct the toddler's attention to a photograph, image or word.

Here is the title of the book. This says, Our Favorite Things from Nature.

I am tapping the title of the book with my finger.

Invite the toddler to mimic your action, touching the photograph, image or word.

Can you find the title of our book and tap it with your finger? Pause.

I see you looking for the title.

Gasp! You've found it. That is the title.

Demonstrate book handling skills, inviting toddlers to handle books with you.

Watch me open ... open ... open the book with my hands.

Would you like to help me open the book?

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Create a class book, Our Favorite Place in Nature, about nature. Request photographs from families or take photographs of the toddlers holding their favorite nature item. Insert photographs into a photo album. If you do not have the suggested materials, create a class book from resealable, plastic bags. Begin by attaching the photos of toddlers to a solid piece of cardstock. Label each page with the toddler's name and the name of the place or object. Place each page into a clear plastic bag, seal it, and fasten the bags together with tape. Sit closely with the toddler as you explore the self-made book together, initiating conversations about the different friends or objects they see in each photograph. Use a tone of voice that helps toddlers hear your excitement for reading.

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

You did it! You've opened the book to a page with a picture of our friend, (friend's name).

Our friend is holding a big rock in his hands. I see bigger rocks by his feet.

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, size, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

All the rocks in this picture look round and bumpy. This rock is big and this rock is huge!

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

Where do you think our friend, (friend's name) is in this picture? Pause.

He is standing on a big mountain with so many rocks.

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Mountains are huge rocks that reach up to the sky.

People like to climb the mountains and look at all the beautiful nature around them.

Watch me pretend to climb, climb, climb a big mountain.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Show me how you would climb a mountain, (toddler's name).

Allow toddlers to play freely as they develop body, spatial and perceptual awareness.

I like the way you are pretending to crawl up the mountain.

Invite the toddler to imitate your actions or repeat the toddler's actions.

I am going to turn the page to see what other favorite things in nature we find. Lift ... lift ... lift.

Can you turn the page just like me?

Language Development

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, using descriptive language.

I am touching the picture of our friend, (friend's name) on this page with my long, gentle finger.

I am using my big, (color) eyes to look all around and find her.

Now, I am using my finger to touch the picture of (toddler's name).

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

This is a picture of (toddler's name) holding a picture of a big lake.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

A lake is full of water. Can you say big lake?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

Yes! This big lake is filled with cool water.

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- As you sit and read together, encourage the toddler to say the name of the friend in the picture as you tell them the name of the friend's favorite thing in or about nature.

- Help young toddlers connect the picture of peers to the peers in person.

Look! This is a picture of our friend (friend's name). She is sitting right next to you today.

For Older Toddlers

- As you sit and read together, encourage the toddler to say the name of the friend as well as the nature item their friend is standing near or holding.
- Place nature objects around the room and encourage the toddler to match them to the images that appear in the book.
- Encourage the toddler to point to the friend who is pictured in the book.
I see (toddler's name) holding a big rock. Where is our friend (friend's name)?

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

Animals and people can swim in cool, blue water of lakes and ponds.

Create personal connections for toddlers as you relate the prop, object or material to their lives or previous experiences.

You love to splash in the water, (toddler's name). I bet the lake is your favorite part of nature.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

We have seen a picture of a mountain and a lake. Will we find more?

Why don't you turn the page and let's find out!

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

I see you peeking at the next page with your bright, (color) eyes. What do you see?

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

Gasp! I see more cool water. This is the big salty ocean.

Can you use your finger to touch the picture of the big, salty ocean?

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

Watch me use my arms to pretend to swim in the ocean.

Can you swim?

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

That is great swimming! You are moving your arms quickly.

Social and Emotional Development

Invite toddlers to connect to peers during play and exploration.

Our friend, (friend's name) is pretending to swim in the ocean.

I see a big smile on her face.

Increase awareness of self-identity by referring to the toddler by name.

(Toddler's name), you are having fun and feeling happy using your arms to swim, swim, swim!

Create a positive learning environment. Smile and laugh as you pretend and play together.

Swimming, climbing and learning about nature is so much fun.

Let's see what more we will find inside this book.

Book Experience: Story Props

Title: **Building a Tree**

Learning Focus: Focused Attention;
Curiosity; Creativity; Conversation;
Comprehension; Exploration

Prep Time: 3-5 minutes

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe a tree (green, brown)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (leaf, tree)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (blow, tap, shake)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Reproducible: Bare Tree Trunk
- Reproducible: Leaf Paper Shapes (one set for each toddler)
- Book Basket (bin or basket)

Select Books

- Include storybooks, picture books, nursery rhymes, songbooks and textured books

Suggested Titles

- *Tap the Magic Tree* – Christie Matheson
- *Hello World! Backyard Bugs* – Jill McDonald

Experience Starter

Select a variety of books that relate to the theme or concept of nature. Be sure to include a variety of genres (storybooks, picture books, nursery rhymes, songbooks and textured books).

Initiate interactions by showing the books and props in an interesting way. (Pat your hands on the sides of your Book Basket as you sing or chant the words below.)

A tisket! A tisket! What's hiding in our basket?

Let's peek inside. What will we see?

So much to explore for you and me!

Show genuine excitement and interest for the books as you model book handling skills.

I see you gently reaching into the basket.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the books.

Pull out a book and tell me what you have found! Would you like to explore it together?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the books.

Wow! You've pulled a big book from the basket.

What do you think we will see inside with our eyes?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

A tree! I think you are right! There is a big tree on the front cover.

Ask permission to read the book before acting on your decision to read. Be aware of cues and body language.

This book must be about trees and nature. Would you like to open it and read it together?

Literacy Development

Demonstrate book handling skills, inviting toddlers to handle books with you.

Watch me carefully pick up the book and open it gently.

We need to be sure to take special care of our books so we can read them again and again.

Can you help me open this book carefully?

Direct the toddler's attention to a photograph, image or word.

Look at you opening up the book so carefully! Great job!

Invite the toddler to mimic your action, touching the photograph, image or word.

You've opened the book to a page with a big tree trunk on it.

Watch me touch the leaves on the tree.

Can you touch the tree, too?

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Gather four to five books, in a variety of genres, related to the theme of nature, and place them in a basket. Choose a variety of books with rhyming verses, predictable text, a variety of real-life photographs or illustrations and different textures to engage the senses. Include books that are sturdy and safe for toddlers to handle. Reproduce and laminate one set of Bare Tree Trunk and Leaf Paper Shapes for each toddler. As you sit closely and explore the books together, use these props to create a playful and engaging experience with toddlers. As you read, encourage the toddlers to interact with the book. For example, as the tree in the story sprouts leaves, have the toddlers add leaves to the Bare Tree Trunk.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Reach inside my basket again. I think there is something else hiding inside.

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

You've found it! Look at this big, brown tree trunk.

Language Development

Narrate and describe the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

I see you waving the big, bare tree trunk up in the air.

Now, you are putting the big, bare tree trunk down on the ground.

Watch for eye gazing, pointing or vocalization to indicate the toddler is showing interest in a prop, object or material. Add comments, details or extended language to your observation.

This brown tree trunk looks just like the brown tree trunk in my book.

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

Here are the limbs of the tree and here are the branches.

There are no leaves. Where should they be?

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

Gasp! I see many colorful leaves on the ground. Green, red, orange and brown.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say colorful leaves?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

You said that nicely! I see you touching each colorful leaf.

Clarify meaning of new word(s) using clear, simple language.

When the weather changes, the leaves on the trees change, too.

Sometimes trees have lots of leaves and sometimes they have no leaves at all.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Promote hand-eye coordination through simple hand and finger play.

Tap the branches of the leaves in my book with your fingers.

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: Row, Row, Row Your Boat

..... Tap, tap, tap the tree.
..... Tap it fast and slow.
..... Tap it once. Tap it twice.
..... Look at the leaves grow!

Now, let's turn the page and see what happens!

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Encourage the toddler to interact with the book by tapping, shaking and rubbing.
- Encourage the toddler to find leaves in a specific color and add them to the tree.

For Older Toddlers

- As the toddler picks a leaf to place on the tree trunk, encourage them to tell you the color. If the toddler needs assistance, label the color and encourage them to repeat after you.
- Encourage older toddlers to sort leaves by color.

Assist or support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

Oh, my! Leaves are growing on the tree in our book.

Let's add our colorful leaves to the tree trunk. Can you bend and reach the green leaves on the ground?

Cognitive Development

Introduce mathematical concepts such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

We've added (number) (color) leaves to our tree trunk.

Let's touch and count them together.

Count the leaves on the tree.

Encourage toddlers to imitate the actions of others.

Look at (toddler's name) gently placing more leaves on the branches.

Would you like to add more leaves to the tree?

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

Look at this tree! There are many colorful leaves on the trunk and branches now.

Initiate simple experiments and investigations to see how things work.

This page says to shake the book.

What do you think will happen if we give this book a shake, shake, shake?

Give it a try!

Demonstrate how objects or materials fit together or work together in different ways.

Let's turn the page to see...

Gasp! *Oh, my! We shook the book and all the leaves fell off.*

Demonstrate how a prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Sometimes the wind can make the leaves fall.

Watch me blow the leaves from this tree like the wind.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Can you blow the leaves off like me?

Social and Emotional Development

Identify the toddler's feelings and express empathy with appropriate language.

I can tell you are feeling surprised. Your eyes and mouth are wide open.

Respond to feelings of toddlers by labeling the emotion and its cause.

You are feeling surprised the leaves came off the tree.

Create a sense of belonging by initiating positive interactions and relationships with peers and caregivers.

It's okay! Let's put the leaves back on our tree together.

Book Experience: Interactive Storytelling

Title: **Bugs in the Grass**

Learning Focus: Focused Attention;
Joint Attention; Communication;
Conversation; Comprehension

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe props (green, scratch)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (grass, bees)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (buzz, fly)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Book Basket
- Story Box
- Felt board
- Felt
- Reproducible: Insect Photograph Cards

Select Books

- Include predictable text or simple storylines

Suggested Titles

- *In the Tall, Tall Grass* – Denise Fleming
- *In the Small, Small Pond* – Denise Fleming

Experience Starter

Select a variety of books that relate to the theme or concept of nature. Be sure to include books with predictable text or simple storylines.

Initiate interactions by engaging interest in the Story Box. (Slowly open the lid of the Story Box for toddlers to see.)

I see a Story Box. I see a Story Box.

Look all around. Look all around.

Tell me, tell me. Tell me, tell me.

What have you found? What have you found?

Show genuine excitement and interest for the books as you model book handling skills.

I brought my Story Box today.

I wonder what will be inside!

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the books.

I have some books about nature. Would you like to see?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the books.

Which nature book looks fun to you?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

You've picked a book with a little boy peeking into the bright green grass.

Ask permission to read the book before acting on your decision to read. Be aware of cues and body language.

What do you think the little boy will find in the green grass?

Would you like to read the book and look at the Story Box to find out?

Literacy Development

Direct the toddler's attention to a photograph, image or word.

The little boy peeking into the grass is on the front cover of our book.

Can you say front cover?

Demonstrate book handling skills, inviting toddlers to handle books with you.

Watch me turn the book. Now, I have found the spine of the book!

This spine holds our book together!

Invite the toddler to mimic your action, touching the photograph, image or word.

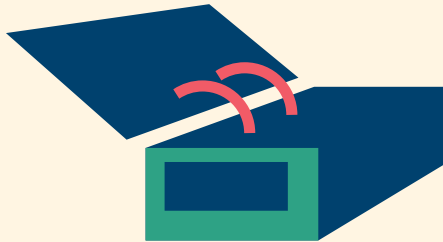
I am going to turn again and find the back of the book. Here it is!

Can you turn ... turn the book and find the front cover again?

You did it!

How to Make a Story Box

Create a Story Box from an empty shoe box. Use the Story Box to invite toddlers to select and explore objects or toys from a familiar story.



Story Box Instructions:

1. Create a door on the top of the shoe box.
Punch holes in one side of a shoe box.
Punch holes in the lid of the shoe box that line up with each hole on the side of the shoe box. Thread string or yarn through the holes to create hinges of the door.
2. Cut a square opening on one side of the shoe box. This opening should be large enough for you to place props inside the shoe box without opening the door.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Look at this felt board.

There is so much scratchy, green grass on the felt board. Would you like to feel it?

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

I like the way you are rubbing your hands back and forth on the scratchy, green grass.

Language Development

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, using descriptive language.

I am using my hands to slowly open the small, (color) door of the Story Box.

I am peeking inside the Story Box.

Would you like to open the small, (color) door and peek, too?

Repeat the rhyme and encourage the toddler's participation.

What is inside the Story Box? What can I see?

Open the door, (toddler's name). Let's look and see!

Use descriptive language as you name or label the object or material selected by the toddler. Be sure to connect the material to the book's content or theme.

What do you see, (toddler's name)? A bee.

Gasp! Yes, you're right! You've found a small, buzzing bee!

Create personal connections for toddlers as you relate the prop, object or material to their lives or previous experiences.

Sometimes we see bees like this one, buzzing by when we visit the playground.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say /b/ ... /b/ ... buzzing bee?

Use ... words ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

Buzzing bees fly high in the sky and down low in the green grass.

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

Here are the bee's black and yellow stripes. Here are his wings for flying.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

Let's buzz and fly this bee over to the scratchy green grass.

Buzz ... buzz ... buzz!

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

I wonder what we will find in our Story Box.

Create a Positive Learning Environment

For this Interactive Storytelling experience, retell a familiar story about nature or insects in your own words. Select a book and review it for words, phrases and actions to use as you engage toddlers in the story. Integrate hands-on, multisensory learning with props or pictures (Reproducible Insect Photograph Cards, felt board, etc.) Reproduce and cut one Insect Photograph Cards Set. Glue these insect photographs to felt, and place them in the Story Box. As you sit closely and explore the book together, use these props to create a playful and engaging experience with toddlers. Encourage toddlers to open the Story Box and discover the different insects that hide in the tall grass. Prompt toddlers to attach them to the felt board.

Repeat the rhyme and encourage the toddler's participation.

What is in the Story Box? What can it be?

Open the door, (toddler's name). Let's look and see!

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

(Toddler's name), you've opened the box. What have you found? Pause.

You've found another insect that lives in the tall, green grass.

Do you know the name of this insect?

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, size, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

This is a small black ant. The ant and the bee are both insects.

An ant uses its legs to crawl on the ground. The bee uses its wings to fly in the sky.

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Watch me help this ant crawl over to the scratchy grass.

I'm crawling quickly. I'm crawling slowly.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Would you like to help this ant crawl and stick him in the grass?

Allow toddlers to move freely as they develop body, spatial and perceptual awareness.

I like the way you are crawling like an ant, (toddler's name).

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

You've opened the Story Box and found two fireflies. One for me and one for you.

Fireflies have lights that go on and off, on and off in the night.

Can you use your hands and stick them to the board? Push, push, push with your fingers.

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

Watch me lean forward and press a firefly into the green grass.

Can you try to lean, too?

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

Great leaning.

We've found some insects. What will we find next?

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Invite toddlers to find an insect from the Story Box on a page inside the book. Encourage them to turn the pages themselves as they search.

For Older Toddlers

- Assist toddlers as they place the insects on the felt board in the order they appear in the book. Encourage toddlers to flip the pages of the book to see what insects comes first, next, etc.
- Point out other nature items that you have been talking about (i.e., stars, moon, etc.).
- Describe an insect and encourage toddlers to find it.

Social and Emotional Development

Increase confidence by acknowledging the actions or responses of the toddler.

Look at you (toddler's name). Your face looks curious.

You are looking at the Story Box. Is there anything else inside?

Provide opportunities for toddlers to demonstrate their growing **understanding of emotions**.

Here is your curious face! Your eyes look like this!

Use a warm tone of voice to comfort toddlers while acknowledging emotions.

It's okay to feel curious! I am feeling curious.

Let's open the door to the Story Box together.

*Continue to open the Story Box with the toddler, discovering the different insects. Match the insects to the images in the book.

Literacy Builder



SAMPLE

SAMPLE

Literacy Builder: Rhyme Time

Title: Searching for the Sky

Learning Focus: Understanding and Response; Vocabulary Development; Phonological Awareness; Imagination; Increased Confidence; Sense of Belonging

Prep Time: 2-3 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe the nature items (golden, shiny)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (sun, star)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (reach, jump)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Basket or container
- Reproducible: Stars
- Reproducible: Moon
- Reproducible: Sun
- Reproducible: Clouds

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that encourage investigation.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Touch the stars, sun, moon and clouds as you sing or chant the words below.)

Nature, nature, all around!

Let's look around and see what we've found!

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

I see you looking high in the sky for nature.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

Look! I see nature down on the ground.

There are white, fluffy clouds and bright shiny stars. Would you like to look for nature with me?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

Yes, you will! What do you think we will find (toddler's name)?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

Big cloud! Yes, I see a white fluffy cloud.

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Follow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I like the way you are rubbing the cloud with your sweet, little fingers.

Would you like to drop it in my basket?

Language Development

Use descriptive language as you name or label the object or material selected by the toddler. Be sure to connect the material to the book, concept or theme.

I see you looking all around again! Do you think you can find the bright, golden sun?

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: If You're Happy and You Know It

If you see the golden sun, pick it up.

If you see the golden sun, pick it up.

Dance and wiggle. Give a cheer.

Place the sun right over here.

If you see the golden sun, pick it up.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Gasp! You've found the golden sun! Can you say golden sun?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

Great job! The golden sun is high in the sky.

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Gather the textured stars, moon, sun and clouds created from a previous activity. If you did not create these or do not have access to the necessary craft supplies, reproduce and cut one of each reproducible listed in the materials section for this activity. Place these items (sun, stars, moon and clouds) around the learning area as you create excitement for this listening game. Using a fun and happy tone of voice, sing and act out a rhyming chant, encouraging the toddler to search for a prop. Let the toddler see your excitement for learning as you explore together. Once they find the specific item (cloud, star, sun or moon), prompt the toddler to bring it back to the basket. Repeat this lively activity by changing the words in the rhyming chant.

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, using descriptive language.

*You are dropping the bright, golden sun into my basket.
Now, you are pulling the bright, golden sun out of the basket.
In ... out. In ... out.*

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

This golden sun is round. I am tracing my finger around and around the golden sun.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

We see the sun during the day. The sun gives us light so we can play outside.

Create personal connections for toddlers as you relate the prop, object or material to their lives or previous experiences.

*Let's look out our classroom window and find the sun. Pause.
There it is high in the sky. It is a beautiful, sunny day for us to play outside.*

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

*Are you ready to find something that we see in the sky?
I twinkle, twinkle in the night.
Shining bright, give you light.
What am I? Pause. A star!
Can you reach out and touch the star?*

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

I like the way you are wiggling your fingers like a bright, twinkling star.

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

Time to play pick up, (toddler's name)! Let's pick up the bright, shiny star.

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: If You're Happy and You Know It

*If you see a shiny star, pick it up.
If you see a shiny star, pick it up.
Dance and wiggle. Give a cheer.
Place the twinkling star over here.
If you see a shiny star, pick it up.*

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

*You've found the shiny star! When do we see the stars, (toddler's name)? Pause.
We see the stars at night when the sky is black.*

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Place the reproducible items in closer proximity to the younger toddlers as they search.
- Start with fewer, familiar items on the ground. Increase the number each time you play.
- After toddlers have found a sun, star, moon or cloud, encourage them to repeat the name after you.

For Older Toddlers

- Place the nature items or reproducible items all around the learning area to encourage older toddlers to move all around as they search.
- Give toddlers clues about a certain item and have them search for that specific part of nature. Provide hints and assistance as needed.

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, size, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

The sun and the stars are both way up in the sky.

We see the sun during the daytime and stars during the nighttime.

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Sometimes, stars can twinkle. Sometimes, stars can shoot across the night sky.

Watch me shoot this star through the air with my hand.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Did you see the shooting star? Would you like to move the star through the sky?

Allow toddlers to move freely as they develop body, spatial and perceptual awareness.

I like how you are running with your star across the room.

You are moving fast.

Prompt toddlers to engage in matching, sorting or classifying of props, objects or materials.

Can you find something else that we see in the nighttime sky?

Social and Emotional Development

Invite toddlers to connect to peers during play and exploration.

Let's invite a friend to help us find something else we see in the nighttime sky.

Observe and acknowledge the reactions of each toddler. Demonstrate awareness and responsiveness to the needs of the toddler.

I see you smiling! You are feeling happy because you've found the moon.

Thank you, (toddler's name), for helping us find the moon.

Thank you for helping us find the moon, (toddler's name).

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

I am standing tall and reaching for the moon.

Can you stand on your toes and reach for the moon, too?

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

Look at you jumping for the moon in the sky.

I will jump, too!

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

Let's drop the moon into the basket!

Literacy Builder: Listen! Listen!

Title: Nature Names

Learning Focus: Understanding and Response; Joint Attention; Vocabulary Development; Phonological Awareness; Imagination; Increased Confidence; Sense of Belonging

Prep Time: 2-3 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe nature (tall, green)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (mountain, forest)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (reach, bend)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Reproducible: Small Nature Photograph Cards
- Nature objects (optional)
- Basket

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that encourage investigation.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Shake the basket with the nature items or Small Nature Photograph Cards inside.)

Listen, listen, with your ear.

Tell me, tell me, what you hear.

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

Gasp! I see you peeking inside my basket to see what is making that sound.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

Would you like to reach inside my basket?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What do you think you will find inside?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler's response. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

This is a picture of rain falling.

I see you pointing up. You're right! The rain comes from the sky.

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Follow the direction of play to follow their interests.

Look at you turning the basket upside down. Now, we have many nature pictures on the ground.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Go ahead! Pick something that fell out of the basket.

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

I like the way you are touching each picture from the big, brown basket.

One ... two ... three ... four ... five. There were many pictures inside.

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

Let's play a fun game together. Pick something from the basket and we will clap out its name with our hands. Are you ready?

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Reproduce and cut one set of Small Nature Photograph Cards and place them in a basket. Create excitement as you encourage toddlers to explore nature in this fun sound game. Integrate hands-on, multisensory learning as you invite toddlers to choose a photograph and tell you the name of the item. If you choose, substitute an assortment of nature objects to create a sensory experience. As you explore together, embed and add more information to extend their learning with a review of previously introduced words and concepts.

Sing a song to create excitement: Sing to the tune of: Row, Row, Row Your Boat

*Search, search, search with me.
I'm looking all about!
Find a picture and say its name.
Then, we'll clap it out!*

Introduce mathematical concepts such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

*Oh, my! You've found a picture of a tall mountain. Moun (clap) ... tain (clap).
I clapped two times when I clapped the word mountain. One ... two!*

Invite the toddler to mimic your actions or repeat the toddler's actions.

*Can you clap the word mountain with me, too?
Moun (clap) ... tain (clap).*

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

*Mountains are land and rocks that rise high in the sky.
Watch me stand tall and reach high like a mountain.*

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Can you pretend to be a tall mountain like me? Pause.

Initiate simple experiments and investigations to see how things work.

*What will happen if I bend down low? Pause.
Now, I am a short mountain!
Short! Bend over. Tall! Stand up straight.*

Encourage toddlers to search for hidden or missing props, objects or materials as you provide gestures, hints or clues to help them locate it.

*I see another picture of a mountain, just like this. Can you find it?
Is this a mountain? No!
Is this a mountain? Yes!*

Social and Emotional Development

Invite toddlers to observe expressions of peers by acknowledging feelings of others.

I see our friend, (friend's name) looking at our pictures, too. He looks curious.

Create a sense of belonging by initiating positive interactions and relationships with peers and caregivers.

Let's ask (friend's name) if he would like to play our game and clap some nature words.

Create a positive learning environment. Smile and laugh as you pretend and play together.

You are a nice friend to share these pictures and play with friends.

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Pick up a Small Nature Photograph Card that the toddler is familiar with, name it, then encourage the toddler to repeat its name.
- Add instruments to engage young toddlers in listening to the parts of the word.

For Older Toddlers

- Substitute an assortment of nature objects to create a hands-on, multisensory experience.
- Encourage the toddler to count the times you clap the syllables.

Language Development

Watch for eye gazing, pointing or vocalization to indicate the toddler is showing interest in a prop, object or material. Add comments, details or extended language to your observation.

I see you looking over at the nature pictures. You are ready to play our game again, aren't you?

Sing a song to create excitement: Sing to the tune of: Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Search, search, search with me.

I'm looking all about!

Find a picture and say its name.

Then, we'll clap it out!

Narrate and describe the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

I see you touching each colorful nature picture.

I see you picking up the picture with the funny, green trees.

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

This is a picture of a forest. Let's clap out forest together.

For (clap) ... est (clap).

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say forest?

Pause ... wait ... imitate Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

This forest has big trees and small trees.

Clarify meaning of new words using clear, simple language.

A forest is a place in nature with many trees and shrubs that cover the ground.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

Can you drop these nature pictures we already found into my empty basket?

Drop ... drop ... drop.

You've dropped three pictures inside.

Assist or support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

I see another photograph way over at the edge of the carpet. Can you walk over and bring it back?

Literacy Builder: Lines, Shapes and Pictures, Too!

Title: Nature Peekaboo

Learning Focus: Joint Attention; Conversation;
Vocabulary Development; Phonological
Awareness; Print Awareness; Math: Matching,
Sorting or Classifying

Prep Time: 5-10 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to
describe pictures (blue, green)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or
objects (ocean, grasshopper)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the
toddler or that you model (bend, turn)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Reproducible: Large Nature Photograph Cards
- Reproducible: Small Nature Photograph Cards
- Basket

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that encourage investigation.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Place Large Nature Photograph Cards around you on the floor and display the Small Nature Photograph Cards in your hand.)

Will you play a game with me?

Look around! What do you see?

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

These are photographs of different things and places in nature.

I see you like these pictures in my hand.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

I see big photographs and small photographs that match.

Do you see them? Would you like to explore them together?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What do you think we could do with these big and small photographs?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

Yes! You've found a big card and a small card with the same picture. They match!

Let's play our peek-a-boo matching game!

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I like to play you're touching each picture.

Language Development

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

I have a picture of the big, blue ocean. Here are the waves that go up and down.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

The ocean is a huge body of cool, salty water. Fish and other animals live in the ocean.

Use descriptive language as you name or label the object or material selected by the toddler. Be sure to connect the material to the book, concept or theme.

You have a picture of bright green grass.

Grass grows in nature.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say /g/ ... /g/ ... green grass?

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Reproduce and cut one set of each Nature Photograph Cards (small and large). Use these materials to engage toddlers in a hands-on, fine motor, memory building activity that explores matching photographs. Show excitement for the new materials as you introduce each Large Nature Photograph Card, discussing the item in the photograph. Then, encourage the toddler to pick one Small Nature Photograph Card from your hand and search for the matching Large Nature Photograph Card on the floor. Help toddlers make connections to the theme of nature as you playfully engage their interest and curiosity in this song and movement experience.

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

Great job! You are holding the picture of green grass.

Create personal connections for toddlers as you relate the prop, object or material to their lives or previous experiences.

We love to run and jump in the green grass on the playground.

Yesterday, you were rolling all over the soft, green grass.

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, or repeat the toddler's actions.

I am turning over my picture of the big, blue ocean and putting it on the floor right here.

Now, I am turning over your picture of the soft, green grass and putting it on the floor right here.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Promote hand-eye coordination through simple hand and finger play.

Let's see if we can match the big pictures we hid on the floor to the little pictures here in my hand!

Get ready to clap our hands to the song and pick a picture from my hand! Are you ready?

Sing a song to create excitement.

Peekaboo! Clap hands twice and pat legs once.

Peekaboo! Clap hands twice and pat legs once.

Can we find a match? Display small pictures for toddlers to choose.

A match for you? Touch the toddler.

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

You've found a small picture of the blue ocean.

Watch me bend down and turn over this big picture to see if it is a match.

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

Can you bend over and flip the card so we can see the picture? Will it be a match?

Social and Emotional Development

Increase confidence by acknowledging the actions or responses of the toddler.

You've turned over the big picture of the big, blue ocean.

They are the same. You've made a match.

Respond to feelings of toddlers by labeling the emotion and its cause.

I can tell you are feeling proud that you've made a match.

Use a warm tone of voice to comfort toddlers while acknowledging emotions.

I am proud of you, too, (toddler's name). You have a great memory!

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Begin with fewer, familiar Nature Photograph Cards.
- Instead of placing the cards face down, keep them facing up and encourage the toddler to find the match.

For Older Toddlers

- Place up to six picture sets out for toddlers to look at and match. Start small and add an additional picture each time you play the game, making sure to introduce the picture and then show the toddlers where you have placed it on the ground.
- Place Large Nature Photograph Cards further apart, encouraging older toddlers to move in search of them.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Let's set the match we've made over here in the big, brown basket.

Now, can you turn over all the big pictures so we can see them again?

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

Nice turning! You've turned over one ... two ... three big picture cards.

We have another big picture card. Can you flip that one over?

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

Okay, let's look at our pictures again.

Then we will turn them over and see if you can remember where each picture is located. Are you ready?

Prompt toddlers to engage in matching, sorting or classifying props, objects or materials.

We can sing our song again and look for a match.

Get ready to clap our hands to the song and pick a picture from my hand! Are you ready?

Sing a song to create excitement.

Peekaboo! Clap hands twice and pat legs once.

Peekaboo! Clap hands wide and pat legs once.

Can we find? Display small pictures for toddlers to choose.

Match for you? Touch the toddler.

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons) and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

You've found a picture of a tall, rocky mountain.

Which one is the big picture card of a tall, rocky mountain?

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, size, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

You've picked up the picture of a tree. Here is the brown trunk and here are the green leaves.

Do the tree and the rain look the same?

No. These are not a match.

Encourage toddlers to use props, objects or materials in a playful way, with an intended purpose.

Let's keep turning over the big picture cards and looking.

Hmmm, where could that mountain be?

Allow toddlers to move freely as they develop body, spatial and perceptual awareness.

I see you scooting closer to the picture cards and bending to turn one over.

Gasp! You've made a match! You've found the picture of the tall mountain!

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Some people like to climb to the top of mountains.

Watch me pretend to climb this mountain. I am climb ... climb ... climbing!

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Now, you climb a tall mountain. Pause.

Look at you climbing so well. You are lifting your legs and your arms.

SAMPLE

Literacy Builder: Hand and Finger Play

Title: Nature Mural

Learning Focus: Joint Attention; Conversation; Vocabulary Development; Emergent Writing; Math: Matching, Sorting or Classifying; Fine Motor: Hand-Eye Coordination; Fine Motor: Hands-On Exploration; Fine Motor: Grasp and Reach

Prep Time: 5-10 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe materials (colorful, yellow)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (rainbow, flower)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (stick, push)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Butcher paper
- Images of nature
- Crayons
- Glue
- Tape
- Name labels
- Basket

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that encourage investigation.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Spread out the nature pictures on the ground. Touch each as you sing or chant the words below.)

Nature pictures, big and small.

I wonder if we can name them all.

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

Gasp! You've found my pictures, (toddler's name).

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

There are so many nature pictures for us to see! Would you like to look for nature with me?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What is your favorite thing in nature, (toddler's name)?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler's response. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

You are picking up the picture of a rainbow! A rainbow must be your favorite thing in nature.

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interests of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I see you pointing to the long, white paper on the wall.

You know just what we are going to do today.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Let's make a classroom mural with our favorite things in nature.

We need some glue. Can you find it?

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

There it is, in my basket!

I like the way you are pulling the small, round cap off the glue stick.

Language Development

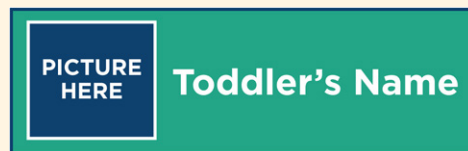
Clarify meaning of new word(s) using clear, simple language.

Glue is sticky! It makes your picture sticky so it will stay on our mural.

Let's add some to the back of your picture.

HOW TO MAKE A LABEL

Create several Name Labels for each child, to be used for all Hand and Finger Play activities. Begin with a photograph of each toddler in your classroom. Cut the toddler's face from the photograph, attach it to an index card, and write the toddler's first name on the card. Laminate the cards as they will be used often.



Create a Positive Learning Environment

Begin by attaching a long sheet of butcher paper to a wall that will serve as a mural. Be sure the paper is within reach of all toddlers. Once the butcher paper is secured, gather images of familiar places and objects found in nature. These images can be printed, collected or cut from magazines. Sit in close proximity to the toddlers so you can explore the images together. During the activity, use an enthusiastic voice as you invite toddlers to search for their favorite image of nature. Gently prompt and guide them to add the image to the classroom mural with tape or glue. For a complete multisensory experience, provide crayons so toddlers may add lines, shapes and marks, further enhancing their pre-writing skills. Identify each toddler's contribution to the mural by placing their Name Label near the drawing and labeling it with a description. For example: (Toddler's Name) favorite thing in nature is green grass. This will help toddlers connect words to pictures and photographs.

Narrate and describe the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

I see you moving the long, round glue stick around and around.

Now, I see you using your ten tiny fingers to press and rub the rainbow on the paper.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

Gasp! It stuck! This rainbow has many colors. I see yellow, blue, green and purple.

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

Watch me use my finger to trace the rainbow.

I start at the bottom and go up ... up ... up and then come down again.

This is called an arch. A rainbow is a colorful arch in the sky after it rains.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say colorful rainbow?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

My favorite color in the colorful rainbow is purple. What about you, (toddler's name)?

Watch for eye gazing, pointing or vocalization to indicate the toddler is showing interest in a prop, object or material. Add comments, details or extended language to your observation.

I see you looking in the basket again. What will you find?

Social and Emotional Development

Increase awareness of self-identity by referring to the toddler by name.

Gasp! Look at this! I've found a picture of your face in our basket. This is (toddler's name)!

Provide opportunities for toddlers to demonstrate their growing understanding of emotions.

Your face looks so happy in this picture! Let's put this Name Label next to the rainbow.

Everyone will know that your favorite part of nature is a rainbow.

Identify the toddler's feelings and express empathy with appropriate language.

Look at that big smile on your face. You are feeling happy putting glue on our mural.

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

Here comes our friend, (friend's name).

(Friend's name,) what is your favorite part of nature? Can you find a picture of it?

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Your favorite thing in nature is a beautiful, (color) flower. Flowers smell sweet.

Watch me use my nose to sniff this yellow flower. Sniff! Sniff!

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Can you use your nose to sniff the flower? How does it smell?

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- If younger toddlers have a difficult time using the glue, place a small piece of tape on their favorite nature picture and encourage them to press it onto the mural.

For Older Toddlers

- Encourage older toddlers to find their Name Label and stick it next to their name and favorite nature item.

Introduce mathematical concepts such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

These are the petals on the flower and this is the stem.

Let's count the yellow petals together.

One ... two ... three ... four ... five ... six (color) petals!

Encourage toddlers to imitate the actions of others.

As we counted, I touched each petal.

Let's count them again and you can touch them like me.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

It's time to glue our flower onto the mural.

Use your fingers to push the picture of the (color) flower onto the mural.

Assist or support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

I have crayons, too! Bend down and choose a color.

Allow toddlers to find creative uses for a variety of writing tools: large crayons, large markers, finger paint or modeling dough. Be sure to consider the age of the toddlers before choosing writing materials.

You chose a (color) crayon just like the (color) flower on the mural.

Look at you, using your crayon to draw a (color) flower, your favorite thing in nature.

SAMPLE

Physical Development

PL

SAMPLE

Physical Development: Move My Body!

Title: We're Going on a Nature Walk!

Learning Focus: Understanding and Response; Joint Attention; Communication; Emergent Writing; Memory; Imitation; Perceptual Information; Gross Motor: Movement and Position; Fine Motor: Hands-On Exploration; Fine Motor: Grasp and Reach

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe pictures (tall, blue)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (beach, mountain)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (kick, swim, climb)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Reproducible: Large Nature Photograph Cards (beach, mountain, lake forest)
- Clear tape
- Basket or container

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that promote the use of fine and gross motor skills.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Jump from image to image as you sing or chant the words below.)

Are you watching? Are you watching?

Follow me! Follow me!

Let's go move our bodies. Let's go move our bodies.

To the places we see. To the places we see.

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

Look at you jumping up and down like me! That is some high jumping, (toddler's name).

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

I see pictures of different places in nature all over the floor.

Would you like to explore them with me?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What do you think we will see in these pictures?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

I see you standing on a picture of the beach.

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I like the way you are turning around and around on the picture.

Be careful, so you don't get dizzy.

Language Development

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

The beach is a beautiful place with sand and water.

Here is the soft, fluffy sand and here is the salty, blue water.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

I see many small waves in the salty, blue water.

A wave is when the water moves up and down along the sandy beach.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say small waves?

Create a Positive Learning Environment

During this experience, focus on the development of fine and gross motor skills as you engage toddlers in this indoor or outdoor movement activity. Attach the Large Nature Photograph Cards to the floor using clear packing tape. Younger toddlers may require less space between for ease of movement. Older toddlers may prefer more space between photograph cards. Have fun learning together! Encourage toddlers to move their bodies from place to place as they imitate or create their own actions. Provide support with movements if necessary.

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

Let's pretend to splash and swim in the small waves together.

Narrate and describe the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

I am moving my long arms and kicking my legs in the salty, blue water.

I am swimming in the small, rough waves.

Watch for eye gazing, pointing or vocalization to indicate the toddler is showing interest in a prop, object or material. Add comments, details or extended language to your observation.

Look at you watching me kick and splash! Can you swim like me?

Sensory Experience

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

Gasp! That was great swimming. You were moving your arms and long, strong legs at the same time.

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

I see another picture on the floor.

Would you like to swim over and investigate the new picture with me?

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

We made it! We went all the way over to a new picture. This is a picture of tall mountains.

Introduce mathematical concepts such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

Let's touch and count the mountains in this picture.

One ... two ... three! Three tall mountains reaching high into the sky.

Invite the toddler to mimic your actions or repeat the toddler's actions.

A mountain is a tall, steep hill that reaches up to the sky.

I am reaching up high ... high ... high into the sky to touch the top of a mountain.

Can you reach and stretch like me?

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Some people like to climb to the top of mountains.

Watch me pretend to climb this mountain. I am climb, climb, climbing!

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Now, you climb a tall mountain. Pause.

Look at you climbing so well. You are lifting your legs and your arms.

How will we get down from the top of the mountain?

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Invite toddlers to create their own actions for a day at the beach or a hike up a mountain during the movement activity.
- Place the Large Nature Photograph Cards closer together on the floor for ease of movement.

For Older Toddlers

- Place the Large Nature Photograph Cards further apart on the floor and create a path. Encourage the toddlers to move along in the direction of the arrows.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Assist or support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

Look at you jumping up and down! Would you like to jump down from the mountain?

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

Let's count to three and jump together.

One ... two ... three ... jump!

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

Wow! That was a big jump, (toddler's name).

Social and Emotional Development

Increase awareness of self-identity by referring to the toddler by name.

Thank you for playing with me today, (toddler's name).

Create a positive learning environment while and laugh as you pretend and play together.

I am having so much fun climbing and swimming with you!

Invite toddlers to connect to peers during play and exploration.

I see another picture across the room.

Let's invite our friend, (toddler's name) to move along with us.

Physical Development: Balance Builders

Title: Day and Night Skies

Learning Focus: Curiosity; Creativity; Understanding and Response; Joint Attention; Communication; Problem-Solving; Perceptual Information; Gross Motor: Movement and Position; Gross Motor: Body Awareness; Fine Motor: Hands-on Exploration

Prep Time: 3-5 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe materials (blue, black, round)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (sun, moon)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (bend, reach)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Reproducible: Sun
- Reproducible: Clouds
- Reproducible: Moon
- Reproducible: Stars
- Butcher paper (blue and black)
- Tape
- Glue
- Basket

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that promote the use of fine and gross motor skills.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Gently pat your hands on the side of the basket.)

*Go outside and look up high!
What do you see in the sky?
The golden sun? The moon aglow?
Or twinkling stars putting on a show?*

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

You've found the pictures in the basket. There is a sun, moon and stars.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

*Look! I have blue and black paper on the wall.
The blue looks like the daytime sky and the black looks like the nighttime sky.
Would you like to play together?*

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What do you think we will find inside of the basket?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

You are picking up the moon.

Be flexible. Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

Look at you waving the moon all around.

Language Development

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

This moon looks like a big, silver circle.

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, using descriptive language.

*I am using my finger to trace this round, glowing moon.
Around and around my finger goes.*

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say /r/ ... /r/ ... round moon?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

*Great job! Sometimes we see a round moon like this one.
Sometimes, the moon is smaller and shaped like a half circle.*

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Create a safe space where toddlers can play, move their bodies and explore nature during this experience. Using tape, hang a sheet of black butcher paper and a sheet of blue butcher paper to the wall. Be sure that the height of the paper is within reach of the toddlers, but will also encourage reaching and stretching. The black paper will represent the nighttime sky and the blue paper the daytime sky. Reproduce and cut one copy of each (sun, clouds, moon and stars). Place them in a basket or container. Invite the toddler to choose a picture from the basket and decide if it should go on the daytime or nighttime sky. Encourage toddlers to move, bend and reach as they attach the prop to the correct colored paper with tape or glue.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

The moon glows in the nighttime sky, giving off a little light to help us see.

Use descriptive language as you name or label the object or material selected by the toddler. Be sure to connect the material to the book, concept or theme.

I see you looking at my blue and black paper. Where does this round moon go?

Do we see it in the blue, daytime sky or the black, nighttime sky? Pause.

The moon goes on the black, nighttime sky.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Assist or support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

Stand up so you can reach the black paper.

Up ... up ... up you go!

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

Watch me stand on my toes and reach to stick the moon on the top of the black paper.

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

Can you stand on your tip-toe toes and reach up ... up ... up to touch the moon?

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Would you like to bend down and reach for something new?

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

I see you bending down low. What will you find next in the big, brown basket?

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

Oh, my! This is the round, golden sun.

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, size, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

This sun is the same shape as the moon we just saw. They are both round.

The sun and the moon both give off light. The sun during the day and the moon at night.

Prompt toddlers to engage in matching, sorting or classifying of props, objects or materials.

Show me where the sun goes! Pause.

That's right, (toddler's name)! We see the sun during the day. The sun goes on the blue sky.

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- For toddlers who are not standing and walking with ease, place the blue and black paper on the ground.
- Provide glue sticks if tape is too difficult for young toddlers.
- Name the photograph and encourage toddlers to repeat what you say.

For Older Toddlers

- Reproduce multiple sets of the Moon, Sun, Stars and Clouds. Invite toddlers to count and sort images.

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

How can we stick the sun on the paper? Pause.

Look at you reaching for the tape.

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

This tape feels /s/ ... /s/ ... sticky! It will keep the sun from falling off the paper.

Watch me pull a piece of tape off and stick it to the back of the sun.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Can you try putting some sticky tape on the back of the sun, like me?

Social and Emotional Development

Increase confidence by acknowledging the actions or responses of the toddler.

Great job! You've put tape on the sun and stuck it way up high on the blue paper.

Identify the toddler's feelings and express empathy with appropriate language.

I see a big smile on your face. You are having fun with the sticky tape.

Use a warm tone of voice to comfort toddlers while acknowledging emotions.

I am having fun with you! Are you ready to stick more objects on the paper with the tape?

Let's have more fun together and find something else we see in the sky during the day.

Physical Development: Visual Perception and Coordination

Title: Bugs in the Grass

Learning Focus: Curiosity; Creativity; Understanding and Response; Joint Attention; Communication; Problem-Solving; Perceptual Information; Gross Motor: Explore Environment; Fine Motor: Hand-Eye Coordination; Fine Motor: Hands-On Exploration; Fine Motor: Grasp and Reach

Prep Time: 3-5 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe materials (green, crinkly)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (grass, bugs)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (squeeze, pull)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Activity table or tray
- Toddler sized tongs
- Plastic insects
- Shredded decorative grass
- Scissors

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that promote the use of fine and gross motor skills.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Place your hands in the activity table and rustle the decorative grass.)

Fast bugs, slow bugs.

High and low bugs.

Big bugs, small bugs.

Can we catch all the bugs?

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

Look at you peering into the table, (toddler's name).

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

Would you like to feel the crinkly green grass?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What else do you see, (toddler's name)?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

Bugs! You are right. There are insects in the crinkly, green grass.

Be flexible. Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

You've found the tongs, too. I see you holding them with two hands.

Cognitive Development

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

We use tongs in the kitchen to turn and pick up food.

Watch me squeeze the tongs with my hand to make them open and close.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Can you try opening and closing the tongs with your hands? Squeeze! Squeeze!

Initiate simple experiments and investigations to see how things work.

Let's practice using these tongs. Hmmm, what can we pick up with the tongs? Pause.

Let's pick up these creepy, crawly bugs!

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

There are many bugs hiding in the green grass.

Can you find them?

Create a Positive Learning Environment

During this experience, select sensory materials to promote multisensory learning. Focus on the development of fine motor control and hand-eye coordination in toddlers. Fill the activity table or tray with shreds of decorative grass and an assortment of plastic insects. Create excitement as you invite toddlers to pull each insect from the long, green grass with tongs. Use a happy tone of voice as you pull insects from the green grass, describe and count them.

Introduce mathematical concepts such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

Let's touch and count the bugs together.

One ... two ... three ... four ... five ... six bugs in the green grass!

Encourage toddlers to search for hidden or missing props, objects or materials as you provide gestures, hints or clues to help them locate it.

I see a small, black bug with long legs. Can you find it?

Gasp! You did find it. This is an ant.

Encourage toddlers to use props, objects or materials in a playful way, with an intended purpose.

Can you try using the tongs to pull the ant from the grass? Squeeze and pull ... pull ... pull.

Sensory Experience

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

Wow! You did a great job using those tongs.

You've pulled one creepy, crawling bug from the grass.

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

There are still more bugs. Let's give our friend, (friend's name) a turn.

(Toddler's name), would you like to catch the bug like your friend?

Social and Emotional Development

Observe and acknowledge the reactions of each toddler. Demonstrate awareness and responsiveness to the needs of the toddler.

I see you peeking at the bugs in the grass. Your face tells me you are feeling scared.

Respond to feelings of toddlers by labeling the emotion and its cause.

You are scared these bugs are real. Don't worry, (toddler's name) these are toy bugs.

Watch me pick one up with my fingers.

Use the toddler's name and respectful language.

Thank you for looking at the bugs, (toddler's name). I see that smile! Are you ready to play with these insects?

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

(Toddler's name), hold the tongs in your hand and squeeze, squeeze!

Promote hand-eye coordination through simple hand and finger play.

I see five little bugs crawling in the grass. Can you grab one with the tongs?

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- If the young toddlers have a difficult time using the tongs, help them squeeze the tongs using hand over hand assistance.
- Provide different tools for young toddlers such as large spoons.
- Place the bugs on top of the grass so toddlers can easily find and grasp them.

For Older Toddlers

- Label an insect by name or color and encourage the toddler to use the tweezers to grab that specific insect.
- Bury the insects in the grass so they are more challenging to find.

Extend the Experience

- Place other nature items in the grass. Describe an item and encourage the toddler to pick up that specific item with the tongs, large tweezers or spoons.

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: Five Little Monkeys

*Lots of little bugs, crawling in the grass.
Hopping and buzzing, moving so fast.
Along came (toddler's name), early one day.
He picked one up, but it flew away!*

Will you pick up a bug or will it fly away?

Demonstrate how to use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

*Some of the bugs are on the other side of the table. They are too far for us to reach.
Watch me slide ... slide ... slide around the table. Can you slide over here, too?*

Language Development

Narrate and describe the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

*I see you reaching into the long, green grass with your arm.
Now, you are grabbing a small (color) insect with your fingers.*

Clarify meaning of new words using clear, simple language.

*You've pulled a green grasshopper from the grass.
This green grasshopper is an insect that jumps from place to place.*

Say the name or name the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say /g/ /g/ green grasshopper?

Pause ... imitate ... Add vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

This green grasshopper is the same color as the grass. It's green!

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

*Those antennae on the grasshopper's head are for hearing and feeling.
Can you touch the antennae, too?*

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

*The grasshopper has six legs.
These two long legs are for leaping. Touch as you explain.*

Watch for eye gazing, pointing or vocalization to indicate the toddler is showing interest in a prop, object or material. Add comments, details or extended language to your observation.

*Thank you for playing with me today, (toddler's name). I see you looking in the grass again.
There are still more bugs in the grass.
Go ahead! Use the tongs to grab another bug.*

* Continue to sing or chant until no insects remain in the grass.

Physical Development: Friends at Play

Title: Earth Bowling

Learning Focus: Social Relationships; Curiosity; Creativity; Understanding and Response; Joint Attention; Communication; Problem-Solving; Perceptual Information; Gross Motor: Explore Environment; Fine Motor: Hands-On Exploration

Prep Time: 5-10 minutes

Estimated Time: 5-7 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe materials (round, blue, green)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (ball, tree, Earth)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (push, kick)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Bouncing balls (green and blue)
- Paper towel or toilet paper tubes (10)
- Green construction paper
- Scissors
- Tape or glue

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that promote the use of fine and gross motor skills.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Set up the bowling pins and ball on the ground. Touch the materials as you sing or chant the words below.)

Will you play a game with me?

Look around! What do you see?

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

(Toddler's name), I can see you are curious.

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

Look at this blue and green ball. It looks like the Earth.

There are tall trees on the green side of the ball. Would you like to explore the ball together?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

What game do you think we could play with these things?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

We are going to bowl. We will see how many trees we can knock down by rolling the earth ball.

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Follow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I like the way you are rolling the ball back and forth, back and forth.

Language Development

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

This round ball looks like the Earth. Here is the blue water and here is the green land.

Use descriptive language as you name or label the object or material selected by the toddler. Be sure to connect the material to the book, concept or theme.

Look at these tall trees. Here is the scratchy, brown trunk and here are the green leaves.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say /t/ ... /t/ ... tall trees?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

Let's use the earth ball to knock over the tall trees.

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, using descriptive language.

Here I go! I am using my hands to push the big, round earth ball.

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Help toddlers explore cooperation and turn taking with this indoor or outdoor activity. Using green construction paper, create large palm fronds or leaves and attach them to the top of each paper towel tube or toilet paper tube to create a tree. Once created, set the trees up like bowling pins and work with the toddlers to find creative ways to knock them down. Focus on helping them learn to play cooperatively with friends as they take turns pushing the ball to knock down pins and setting them back up. Be sure to describe and praise the actions of the toddlers as well as any courteous interactions among peers. Have fun integrating hands-on, multisensory learning of concepts during this experience.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

The round earth ball is rolling, rolling, rolling!

It is moving fast. Pause.

Gasp! I've knocked over one ... two ... three ... four tall trees!

Sensory Experience

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

Look at you walking over to pick up the bouncing, (color) ball!

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Are you ready to take a turn rolling the Earth toward the trees?

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: Humpty Dumpty Go Round the Mulberry Bush

This is the way we roll the ball.

Roll the ball. Roll the ball.

This is the way we roll the ball.

We push it toward the trees!

Wow! Look at all the trees that you knocked down!

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Assist or support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

Let's bend down to straighten the trees.

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

Grab the tree trunk and lift with your hands. Pause.

Great job! You stood all of the trees back up. Now, you are ready to bowl!

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

Watch me squat down low to push ... push ... push the ball.

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

Can you squat like me?

Great squatting. Now, push the earth ball with your hands.

Social and Emotional Development

Invite toddlers to observe expressions of peers by acknowledging feelings of others.

Here comes our friend, (friend's name). She looks curious.

Let's invite her to bowl with us.

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Allow the play to follow the toddler's lead. Use rich and repetitive language as you encourage the toddler to push, roll, kick and toss the ball toward the tree.
- Encourage toddlers to take turns and help their peers.

For Older Toddlers

- Spread the tree pins far apart and encourage toddlers to knock over a specific tree.
- Encourage the toddler to count the number of trees knocked down.
- Count the number of pins that fall when the ball rolls fast or slow.

Extend the Experience

- Play kickball or hot potato using the ball.

Create a sense of belonging by initiating positive interactions and relationships with peers and caregivers.

(Toddler's name), we are having so much fun using this ball to knock down trees.

Would you like to roll the ball towards the tall, green trees?

Provide opportunities for toddlers to demonstrate their growing **understanding of emotions**.

Look at that sweet smile on (toddler's name) face. She is feeling happy to have a turn.

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

How would you like to move the ball toward the trees? Please.

I see you pointing to your foot. Would you like to kick the ball?

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Watch me use my foot to kick the ball toward you.

It's rolling slow ... ly, slow ... ly.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Can you kick the ball toward the tall trees?

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

How many trees will you knock down?

Go ahead! Give the ball a kick and we will see!

Allow toddlers to move freely as they develop body, spatial and perceptual awareness.

Wow! You swung your leg and kicked the ball hard!

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, size, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

I've kicked the ball hard and it rolled quickly, quickly, quickly!

I've kicked the ball gently and it rolled slow ... ly, slow ... ly!

Prompt toddlers to engage in matching, sorting or classifying of props, objects or materials.

Wow! Six trees fell to the ground and two trees are still standing tall.

Some are standing up and some trees have fallen down. Up ... down!

Can you pick up the trees on the ground and help them stand tall?

Invite the toddler to mimic your actions or repeat the toddler's actions.

(Toddler's name), are you ready to bowl with your feet like your friend?

Interest Area



SAMPLE

Interest Area: Pretend Play

Title: Bug Hunting

Learning Focus: Social Relationships; Creativity; Imagination; Communication; Vocabulary Development; Phonological Awareness; Imitation; Symbolic Play; Pretend Play; Perceptual Information

Prep Time: 3-5 minutes

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe bugs (green, small, creepy)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (bug, insect, grass)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (scoop, flap)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Plastic insects
- Magnifying glasses
- Bug net
- Gloves
- Bug jar

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials that represent real-life experiences through pretend play.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Place your hands over your brow as you pretend to search for something.)

We are going on a bug hunt!
We are going to catch some little ones.
Where will we find them?
Let's go take a look!

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

I see you looking all around the room, (toddler's name)

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

Would you like to go on a bug hunt with me?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

First, we need something to catch the bugs. What could we use?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

Gasp! You've found a bug net! We will use this to catch the bugs in our classroom.

Be flexible. Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I see you waving the net up in the air, back and forth, back and forth.

Language Development

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it..

Look at this magnifying glass.
Can you say magnifying glass?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

A magnifying glass makes things look bigger than they are.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

I also have a big, clear jar to put the insects in once we find them.

Use descriptive language as you name or label the object or material selected by the toddler. Be sure to connect the material to the book, concept or theme.

I see you looking all around for creepy, crawly bugs. Pause.
Gasp! You've found one!

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Engage toddlers in a hands-on, multisensory learning experience while introducing them to new concepts and materials. Gather the suggested materials to engage toddlers in a dramatic play situation. Hide the assortment of plastic insects around the learning area and encourage toddlers to use the props provided to find and explore them. As you engage toddlers in play, describe their actions, show affection and praise their efforts.

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

This red bug has black polka dots on his wings. This is a ladybug.

This ladybug has six wiggly legs.

Create personal connections for toddlers as you relate the prop, object or material to their lives or previous experiences.

A ladybug landed next to us on the playground yesterday.

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, using descriptive language.

I am using my fingers to pick up the small, round ladybug.

Now, I am putting the small, round ladybug into the jar and putting the lid on top.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

We found one insect! How many more will we find?

Let's keep looking and grab another!

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing the tune "We're Going on a Bear Hunt".

We are going on a bear hunt!

We are going to catch some little ones.

Where will we find them?

Let's go take a look!

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

Oh, my! You found another insect! Look at you touching this big, green insect with your hands!

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

This is a bright green grasshopper.

Let's touch and count the legs on this insect.

One ... two ... three ... four ... five ... six leaping legs!

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, size, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

The first bug we've found was red and black. This bug is bright green.

They both have six legs.

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Let's use the net to scoop up the grasshopper.

Watch me lower the net and scoop up ... up ... up.

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Place the insects so they are visible and easy to find for younger toddlers.
- Allow the play to follow the toddler's lead. Use rich and repetitive language as you encourage the toddler to use their imagination.

For Older Toddlers

- Hide the insects around the room and encourage the toddler to find them.
- Encourage the toddler to move like different insects (i.e. hop, fly, crawl).
- Encourage the toddler to count the insects in the jar you have collected.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Would you like to try to scoop up the green grasshopper with the net?

Great scooping, (toddler's name).

Encourage toddlers to imitate the actions of others.

Can you use your fingers to drop the grasshopper into the jar like me?

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

How many insects are in the jar now? Pause.

Two! We found two insects on our bug hunt.

Allow toddlers to move freely as they develop body, spatial and perceptual awareness.

Look at you leaping like a grasshopper. Let's leap around and look for more insects.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Encourage toddlers to reach and grasp with hands and fingers as they explore the prop, object or material.

I see a bug that flies up on this shelf. It's a /b/ ... /b/ ... butterfly.

Can you reach with your arm and grab the butterfly with your fingers?

Assist or support toddlers as they explore new actions such as bending down, moving from sitting to standing, running and jumping.

Now, let's flap, flap, flap our arms like butterfly wings.

Social and Emotional Development

Provide opportunities for toddlers to demonstrate their growing **understanding of emotions**.

Look at (toddler's name) flapping her wings and smiling so big.

She is feeling happy and having so much fun.

Increase awareness of self-identity by referring to the toddler by name.

I see a smile on your face, (toddler's name). You had fun hunting for bugs today.

Create a sense of belonging by initiating positive interactions and relationships with peers and caregivers.

I had fun with you, too. Would you like to look for more? We can hunt together.

Interest Area: **How It Works (Science and Math Explorer)**

Title: **Rain, Rain, Falling Down**

Learning Focus: Flexibility; Conversation; Vocabulary Development; Discovery; Problem-Solving; Spatial Awareness; Math: Counting; Math: Matching, Sorting or Classifying; Sensory Exploration

Prep Time: 2-3 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe materials (blue, fluffy, beautiful)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (shaving cream, dropper)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (squeeze, fall)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Large droppers
- Blue food coloring
- Small bowl
- Shaving cream
- Jar or clear container
- Water

Experience Starter

Select sensory materials used for simple experiments.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Demonstrate the motion of rain as you sing or chant the words below.)

Rain, rain, falling down.

Pitter, patter on the ground.

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

I see you looking at my fingers, (toddler's name).

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

I have something for us to do today. Would you like to make some fake rain?

Rain is an important part of nature. Plants need water to grow.

We water plants to help them grow and keep earth beautiful.

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

You've found my can of shaving cream.

What do you think we can do with the shaving cream?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

You are pointing up toward the sky. The rain does fall from the sky.

Today we can use the shaving cream to make clouds!

Be flexible. Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I like the way you are rolling the shaving cream bottle on the floor.

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Are you ready to make rain in this jar? Go ahead! Open the shaving cream!

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

Thank you for taking the large, round top off the shaving cream for me.

Language Development

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

I am going to squirt some shaving cream in this jar, on top of the water.

Gasp! The shaving cream looks like a white, fluffy cloud.

Create a Positive Learning Environment

In this activity, toddlers are exposed to the concept of rain through hands-on, multisensory learning. Use the suggested materials to prompt investigation skills, predictions and problem-solving. Fill the jar about three quarters full with regular tap water. Use the shaving cream to fill the remaining portion of the cup, creating a cloud. Encourage toddlers to use the large droppers to drip food coloring, drop by drop, onto the shaving cream cloud. As the food coloring collects in the shaving cream cloud, it will begin to seep from the bottom, falling like rain. Position your body to face toddlers during the experience and discuss your observations. Have fun learning and exploring together!

Clarify meaning of new word(s) using clear, simple language.

A cloud is filled with tiny drops of water or ice. The drops are so light they float in the sky. Clouds float high in the sky. Sometimes they are white and sometimes they are gray. We see gray rain clouds during a storm.

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say /r/ ... /r/ ... rain cloud?

Pause ... wait ... imitate Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

I know a silly song about rain clouds. Sing and move with me.

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: I'm a Little Teapot

*I'm a little white cloud in the sky. Point to the sky.
Watching as the world goes by. Looking with hands over your brow.
Sometimes I turn gray, but don't you pout. Make a sad face.
This is how my rain comes out. Rain down with fingers.*

Narrate and describe the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

*You are wiggling your fingers like little, wet rain drops falling down.
Wiggle, wiggle those fingers.*

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

I have blue food coloring and small droppers to make rain.

Cognitive Development

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

*Watch me dip the dropper into the bowl of blue food coloring and squeeze.
Gasp! It sucked the blue up into the dropper.*

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

*Can you hold a dropper and fill it with blue food coloring?
Squeeze ... squeeze ... squeeze.*

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

Great job, (toddler's name). Your dropper is full of blue food coloring.

Initiate simple experiments and investigations to see how things work.

What will happen if I squeeze it again? Let's investigate!

Demonstrate how objects or materials fit together or work together in different ways.

*Watch me use my fingers to squeeze again. Pause.
Drop by drop, the blue food coloring is coming back out.
Drip ... drop. Drip ... drop. Drip ... drop.*

Encourage toddlers to imitate the actions of others.

Can you squeeze your dropper and put some blue food coloring on the shaving cream cloud?

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Provide kitchen basters for younger toddlers so they can easily grasp and squeeze them.

For Older Toddlers

- Encourage toddlers to count how many drops of rain they put onto the shaving cream.
- Describe the process of rain. Show toddlers various pictures of storm clouds and rain falling from the sky.

Introduce mathematical concepts such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

You've put one ... two ... three ... four drops onto the cloud.

Encourage toddlers to search for hidden or missing props, objects or materials as you provide gestures, hints or clues to help them locate it.

Oh, no! Where did the drops of food coloring go? Did they disappear?

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, touch, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

Keep squeezing slowly and adding more drops to the cloud.

Squeeze ... drip. Squeeze ... drop.

Encourage toddlers to use their bodies in different ways. Take into consideration each toddler's age and stage of development.

Your dropper is empty! Can you bend and reach the food coloring?

Fill your dropper again, (toddler's name).

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

Now, reach over the jar and drop ... drops onto the cloud.

Gasp! Look! The rain is coming down from the shaving cream cloud.

Sing a song to increase excitement. Sing to the tune of: Where is Thumbkin?.

Rain is falling. Rain is falling.

Down, down, down. Down, down, down.

Pitter, pitter, patter. Pitter, pitter, patter.

Drip, drip, drop. Drip, drip, drop!

Social and Emotional Development

Create a positive learning environment. Smile and laugh as you pretend and play together.

What will happen if I drop more blue raindrops onto the cloud? Pause.

It is raining harder! I see many blue raindrops falling.

Identify the toddler's feelings and express empathy with appropriate language.

Gasp! Your eyes opened wide and you gasped! You felt surprised we've made rain in the jar.

Increase confidence by acknowledging the actions or responses of the toddler.

You filled and emptied the dropper so well. Look at all of the rain drops you have made.

Great work, (toddler's name)!

Interest Area: Music and Movement

Title: Reach for the Stars

Learning Focus: Social Relationships; Sense of Identity; Vocabulary Development; Phonological Awareness; Spatial Awareness; Sensory Exploration; Perceptual Information; Gross Motor: Body Awareness

Prep Time: 2-3 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe materials (big, small, silver)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (star)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (jump, catch)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Yarn
- Reproducible: Stars
- Tape

Experience Starter

Create a musical experience using sensory materials, instruments or song.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Touch and point to the stars around the room.)

Children, children, come along.

It's time to sing a silly song.

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

I see you've found my stars up high, (toddler's name).

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

I spy more stars on the floor. Stars up high and stars down low. Would you like to find stars with me?

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

Where should we look first?

Pause ... and wait for the toddler's response. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

You've found a shiny, silver star!

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interests of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the direction of play to follow their interests.

I like the way you are jumping on that star.

Language Development

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

This star is silver and has five points. Watch me touch each one.

Now, you touch them as I count. One ... two ... three ... four ... five!

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

Can you say /s/ ... /s/ ... silver star?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

This is a big, silver star. Over there, I see a small, silver star.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

Stars twinkle way up high in the nighttime sky.

In the sky, some stars are big and some are small, just like these stars on the ground.

Create personal connections for toddlers as you relate the prop, object or material to their lives or previous experiences.

We can look up and see stars in the sky at night.

Do we see stars on the ground like these? Pause. No, that's silly!

Create a Positive Learning Environment

For the following experience, reproduce multiple sets of Stars in various sizes. These sensory materials will create an exciting learning experience. Using yarn, hang some of the stars from the ceiling, ensuring they are long enough for the toddler to reach them with some effort. Place other stars on the ground or around the learning area. Engage toddlers in play as you sing. Encourage toddlers to jump from star to star and reach up high to touch the stars. Be sure to show sensitivity and respect to individuals who may not wish to participate.

Use self-talk to discuss your actions, using descriptive language.

*I am going to jump from one small, twinkling star to another small, twinkling star as I sing a silly song.
Will you sing and jump with me?*

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

*Jumping, leaping, on a star.
Some are close and some are far.
Hopping, stomping, one by one.
We are having so much fun.
Jumping, leaping, on a star.
Some are close and some are far.*

Use descriptive language as you name or label the object or material selected by the toddler. Be sure to connect the material to the book, concept or theme.

*Wow! That was a lot of jumping!
I see you looking up at the small, twinkling stars in the sky.*

Sensory Experience

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Would you like to catch these stars?

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

I like the way you are standing on your toes and reaching for the star with your long, strong arms.

Fine and Gross Motor Development

Promote hand-eye coordination through simple hand and finger play.

Can you reach up high with your arms and grab with your fingers?

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

*Catching, catching, little stars.
Reaching for them with our arms.
Stretching, reaching, way up high.
Grabbing stars up in the sky.
Catching, catching, little stars.
Reaching for them with our arms.*

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

Look at you push ... push ... pushing the star! Now, it is waving back and forth like a shooting star in the sky.

Demonstrate how toddlers can use their bodies in different ways to promote balance, control and coordination.

*Watch me reach and pull a star down.
Reach and pull. Reach and pull. Can you try that?*

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Hang stars low enough so young toddlers can reach.
- Hold the toddler up to stretch and reach for higher stars.
- Allow toddlers to scoot or crawl from star to star if they are more comfortable.

For Older Toddlers

- Encourage toddlers to move with you and sing along to the nursery rhyme.
- Allow older toddlers to create their own interesting movement for each new verse as you follow their lead.

Cognitive Development

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

Look at you! You've pulled down a big star that was hanging from the sky.

Compare similarities and differences in shapes, lines and other details by identifying distinguishing characteristics (color, length, size, etc.) that are different from the previous material.

This is a big silver star. You are standing on a small silver star.

Big ... small. Big ... small.

Invite the toddler to mimic your actions or repeat the toddler's actions.

(Toddler's name), would you like to reach and pull a star like your friend, (friend's name)?

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

*Catching, catching, little stars.
Reaching for them with our arms.
Stretching, reaching, way up high
Grabbing stars up in the sky.
Catching, catching, little stars.
Reaching for them with our arms.*

Prompt toddlers to engage in matching, sorting or classifying of props, objects or materials.

Great reaching! (toddler's name)! You caught a silver star.

Is this a big star or small star? Pause.

This is a big, big star and here is the small star. Big ... small!

Ask questions that encourage thinking and reasoning skills (problem-solving, mathematical thinking, making comparisons). Pause ... and wait for the toddler to process your question and think about a response.

How many points does this big star have? Is it the same as the small star? Pause.

Let's touch and count together. One ... two ... three ... four ... five!

They both have five points.

Social and Emotional Development

Invite toddlers to connect to peers during play and exploration.

Look at (toddler's name)! She is crawling from star to star. Would you like to crawl, too?

Use the toddler's name and respectful language.

(Toddler's name) and (toddler's name) are crawling from shiny star to shiny star!

You are playing so nicely together! Thank you friends!

Use a warm tone of voice to comfort toddlers while acknowledging emotions.

I see big, bright smiles on your faces. You are feeling happy crawling on these silver stars!

Interest Area: Creative Connections

Title: Nature Sculpture

Learning Focus: Focused Attention; Curiosity; Creativity; Imagination; Communication; Vocabulary Development; Emergent Writing; Sensory Exploration; Perceptual Information

Prep Time: 3-5 minutes

Estimated Time: 3-5 minutes

Vocabulary

Adjectives: Select interesting words to describe art and nature items (squishy, brown)

Nouns: Identify, name or label materials or objects (modeling dough, twig)

Verbs: Use words that describe actions of the toddler or that you model (roll, press)

Before You Get Started

Select Materials

- Modeling dough (a fist-sized portion for each toddler)
- Small paper plates
- Assorted nature items (twigs, bark, rocks, leaves, grass)

Experience Starter

Select sensory, hands-on materials that promote child-initiated creativity.

Initiate interactions by showing the props in an interesting way. (Squeeze and press your fingers into the modeling dough.)

Look around! What do you see?

It's squish ... squish ... squishy!

Watch and observe as you allow time for toddlers to investigate and explore the props, toys or objects.

I can tell you are feeling curious, (toddler's name).

Conversation Starter

Invite and encourage the toddler to explore the materials.

I have squish ... squish ... squishy modeling dough and a tray full of nature items.

Would you like to touch and feel the ...

Ask an engaging question to encourage interest and curiosity in the materials.

How do you think they will feel ...

Pause ... and wait for the toddler to respond. Acknowledge the toddler by adding language to his verbal or nonverbal response.

You are rubbing your fingers on a smooth, green leaf.

Be flexible! Follow the lead and interest of the toddlers as they show you how they engage with the materials. Allow the children to play to follow their interests.

Oh, look! (toddler's name) found a big ball of squishy, modeling dough.

I like the way you are patting the dough with your hands.

Encourage Gross Motor Development

Promote hand-eye coordination through simple hand and finger play.

Can you use your hands and fingers to roll, roll, roll the clay into a ball?

Sing a song to create excitement. Sing to the tune of: Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Roll, roll, roll the dough.

Roll it with your hands.

Roll it fast. Roll it slow.

Show me where it lands.

Encourage toddlers to use their hands in different ways (poke, turn, flip, lift, squeeze, push or drop).

I like the way you are using your fingers to poke holes in the modeling dough.

Allow toddlers to find creative uses for a variety of writing tools: large crayons, large markers, finger paint or modeling dough. Be sure to consider the age of the toddlers before choosing writing materials.

Can you poke the dough with the nature items?

You knew exactly what we were going to do today.

Create a Positive Learning Environment

Gather various items found in nature (i.e., rocks, pine straw, bark, twigs, leaves, etc.) and all suggested materials for this experience. Show your excitement for the new materials as you explore and play with them together. Give each toddler a small portion of clay or modeling dough, encouraging them to use their imagination to create a three-dimensional sculpture using the nature items. Add language as you label and describe the materials the toddler chooses as well as their actions. If a toddler chooses not to interact, that is okay! When the sculpture is complete, place it on a small, paper plate to dry.

Language Development

Say the name or make the sound of an object as you encourage the toddler to repeat it.

We are going to use these nature items and this modeling dough to make a nature sculpture.

That's a new word. Can you say sculpture?

Pause ... wait ... imitate. Add to vocalizations or gestures using complete sentences.

We need modeling dough to make our sculptures. Here is your piece, (toddler's name).

Clarify meaning of new word(s) using clear, simple language.

A sculpture is art that stands up big and tall. It is not flat, like a piece of paper.

Watch for eye gazing, pointing or vocalization to indicate the toddler is showing interest in a prop, object or material. Add comments, details or extended language to your observation.

I see you looking at the nature items on my tray.

Which ones will you add to your ball of modeling dough?

Touch and describe any unique features or characteristics of the prop, object or material, prompting the toddler's attention.

Here are some bumpy rocks, green leaves, brown twigs and green grass.

Narrate and describe the toddler's actions using descriptive language.

I see you picking up a long, brown twig.

Now, you are pressing the long, brown twig into the modeling dough.

Use a variety of words, signs or gestures to describe the texture, shape, color or use of an item.

A twig is a small branch from a bigger tree. This twig is long and skinny.

I see a small, green leaf at the top of this twig.

Sensory Experience

Acknowledge the toddler's choice of sensory exploration using descriptive language.

You've found a small, smooth rock. I like the way you are rolling it around and around the table.

Invite toddlers to touch, hold or handle the prop, object or material.

Are you ready to add the rock to your nature sculpture?

Cognitive Development

Initiate simple experiments and investigations to see how things work.

What will happen if you press the rock into the modeling dough? Pause.

Gasp! It doesn't move! The squishy modeling dough holds it in place.

Explore together in a playful, easy-going manner, as you embed learning opportunities.

I see green leaves, brown leaves and red leaves.

These look like leaves that have been falling off the trees on our playground.

Would you like to add them to your nature sculpture?

Modifications and Adaptations

For Younger Toddlers

- Assist toddlers as they add nature items to the modeling dough ensuring they are secure.
- As the toddler points to items on their sculpture, encourage them to name and count each item.

For Older Toddlers

- Encourage the toddler to count the nature items added to the nature sculpture.
- Name a nature item and encourage toddler to locate it on their sculpture.
- Follow the lead of the toddler and encourage creativity.

Demonstrate how the prop, object or material can be used. Encourage exploration and discovery of the item.

Leaves fall from the trees when the wind blows or when the seasons change.

Watch me hold these leaves up high and drop them.

They are slowly falling, just like they fall from the trees.

Encourage toddlers to use the prop, object or material to explore how things move and work.

Toss your leaves up to see what happens!

Encourage toddlers to use props, objects or materials in a playful way, with an intended purpose.

I like the way you stuck these leaves onto your sculpture, right underneath the tall twig.

It looks like these leaves fell down ... down ... down from the twig.

Introduce mathematical concepts such as comparisons, counting or one-to-one correspondence.

Let's touch and count all the pretty pieces of nature you've put on your sculpture.

One ... two ... three! Wow!

Social and Emotional Development

Invite toddlers to observe expressions of others by acknowledging feelings of others.

Look at the beautiful sculpture the (toddler's name) made. He is feeling proud of himself.

Respond to feelings of toddlers by labeling the emotion and its cause.

Creating the sculpture made you feel proud. You've worked so hard to create that beautiful piece of art.

Observe and acknowledge the reactions of each toddler. Demonstrate awareness and responsiveness to the needs of the toddler.

I see you reaching for modeling dough. You must be ready to make another nature sculpture.

I will help you to get the materials that you need!

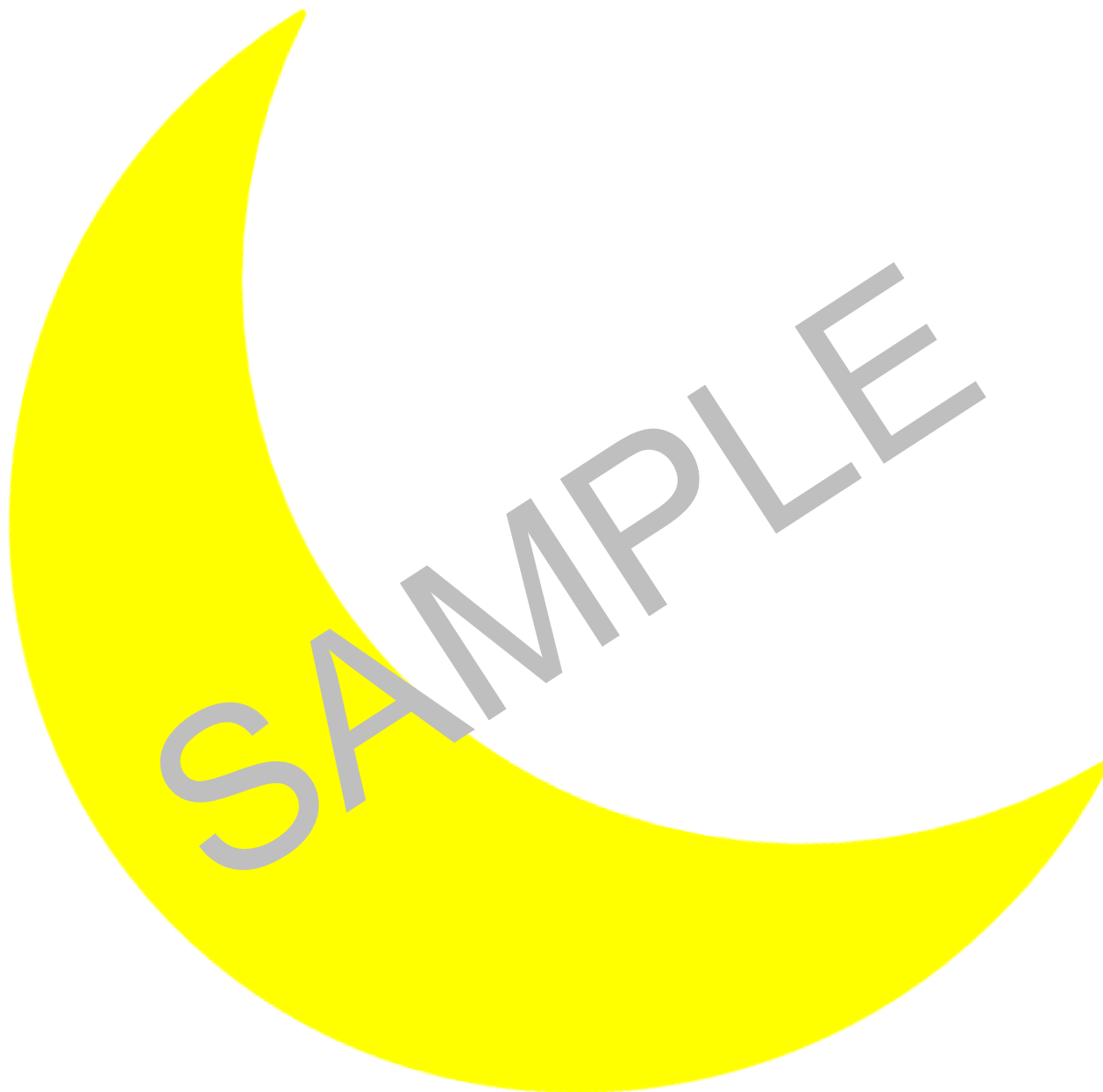
Reproducibles

- **Language Builder** / Super Searcher / Sky Photograph Cards, Moon, Stars, Clouds and Sun
- **Language Builder** / Language Starter / Large Nature Photograph Cards and Insect Photograph Cards
- **Language Builder** / Walk and Talk! / Large Nature Photograph Cards
- **Book Experience** / Story Props / Bare Tree Trunk and Leaf Paper Shapes
- **Book Experience** / Interactive Storytelling / Insect Photograph Cards
- **Literacy Builder** / Rhyme Time / Moon, Stars, Clouds and Sun
- **Literacy Builder** / Listen! Listen! / Small Nature Photograph Cards
- **Literacy Builder** / Lines, Shapes and Pictures, Too / Small and Large Nature Photograph Cards
- **Physical Development** / Move My Body! / Large Nature Photograph Cards
- **Physical Development** / Balance Builder / Moon, Stars, Sun and Clouds
- **Interest Area** / Music and Movement / Stars

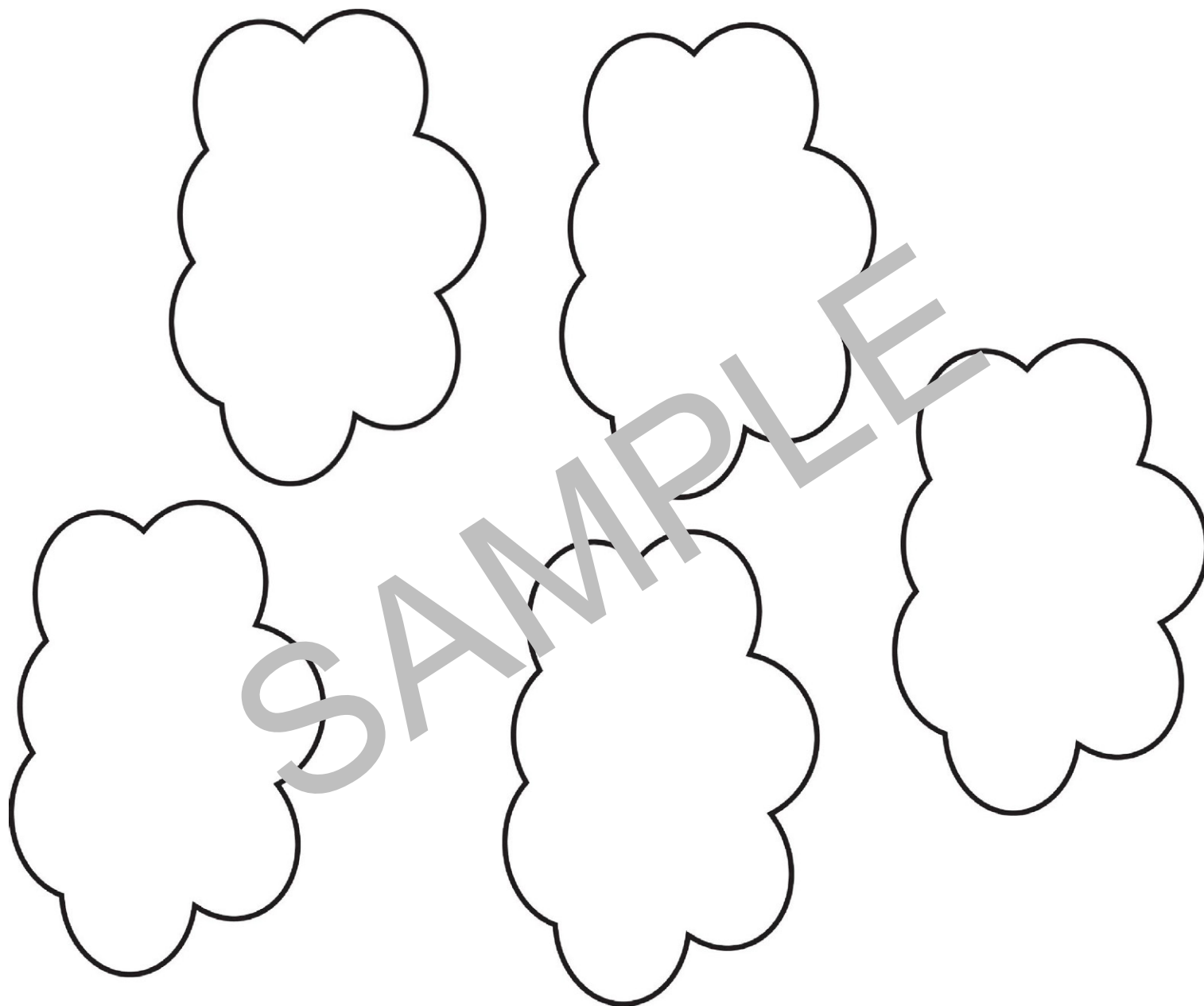
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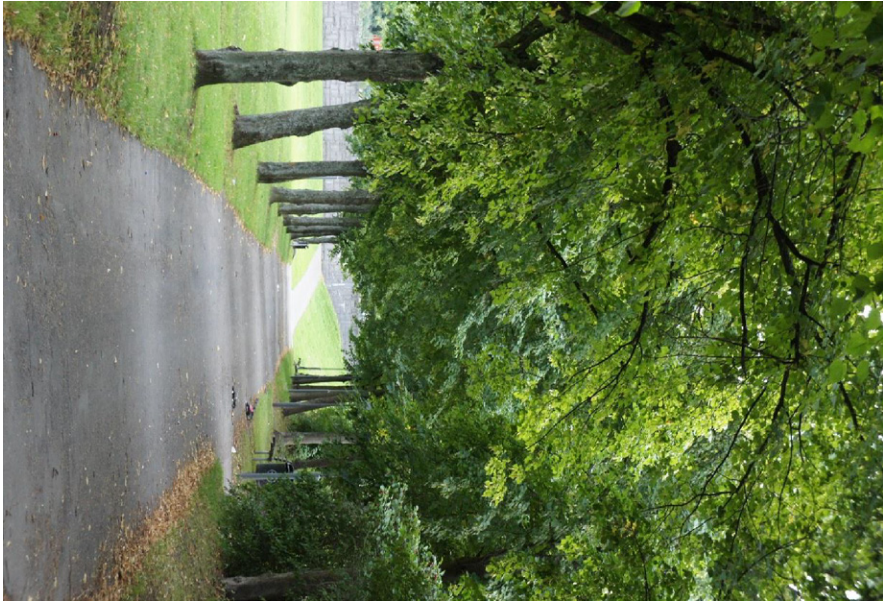
Sky Photograph Cards







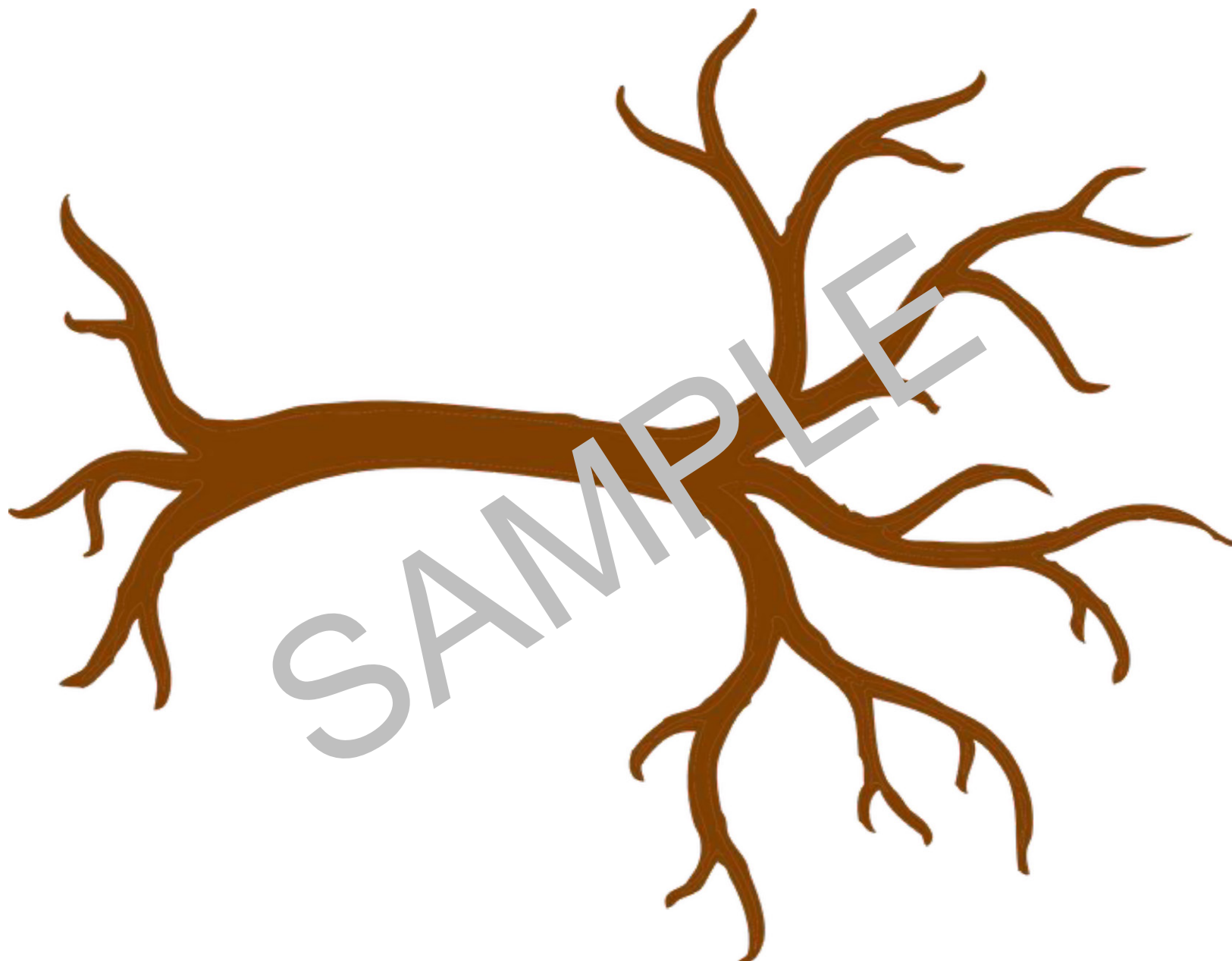




Small Nature Photograph Cards



Small Nature Photograph Cards



Bare Tree Trunk



Leaf Paper Shapes

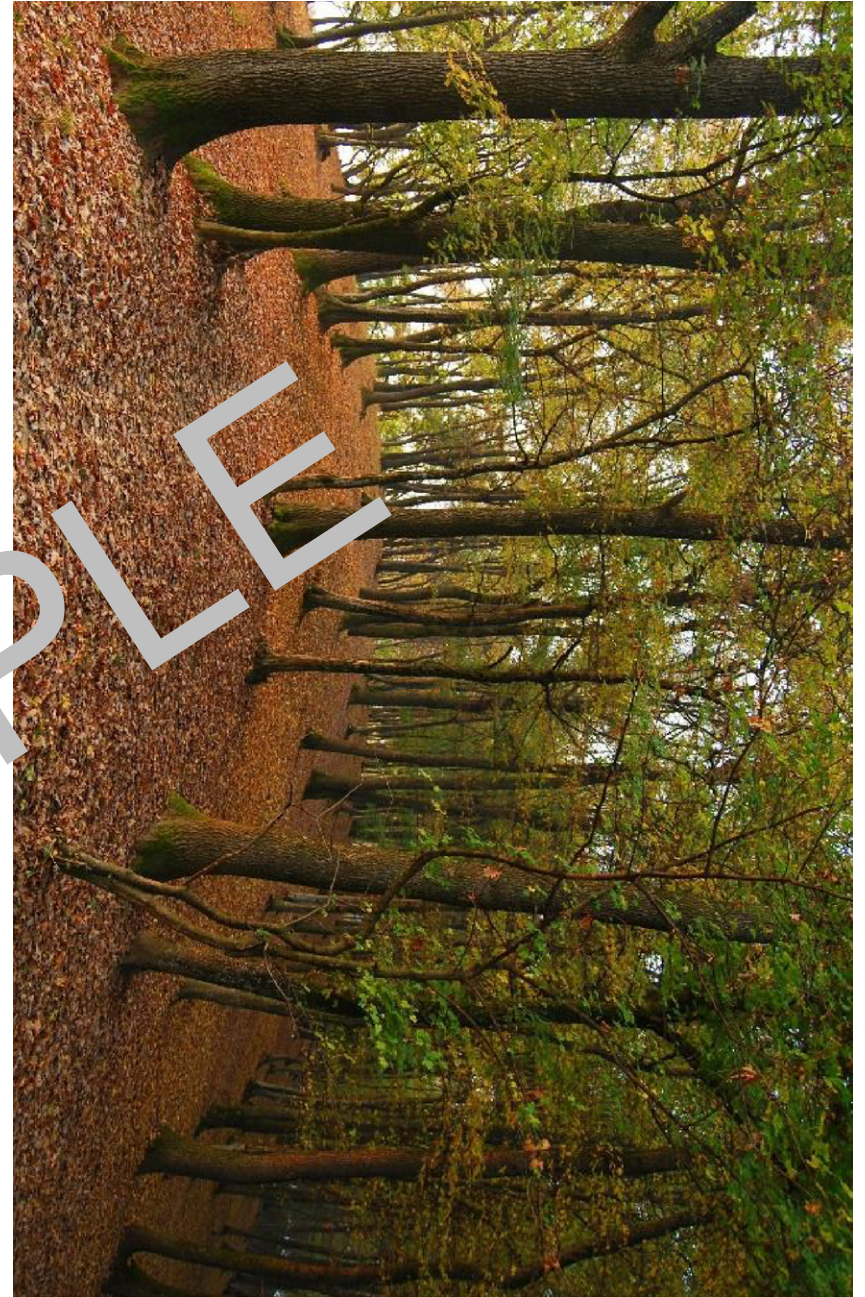
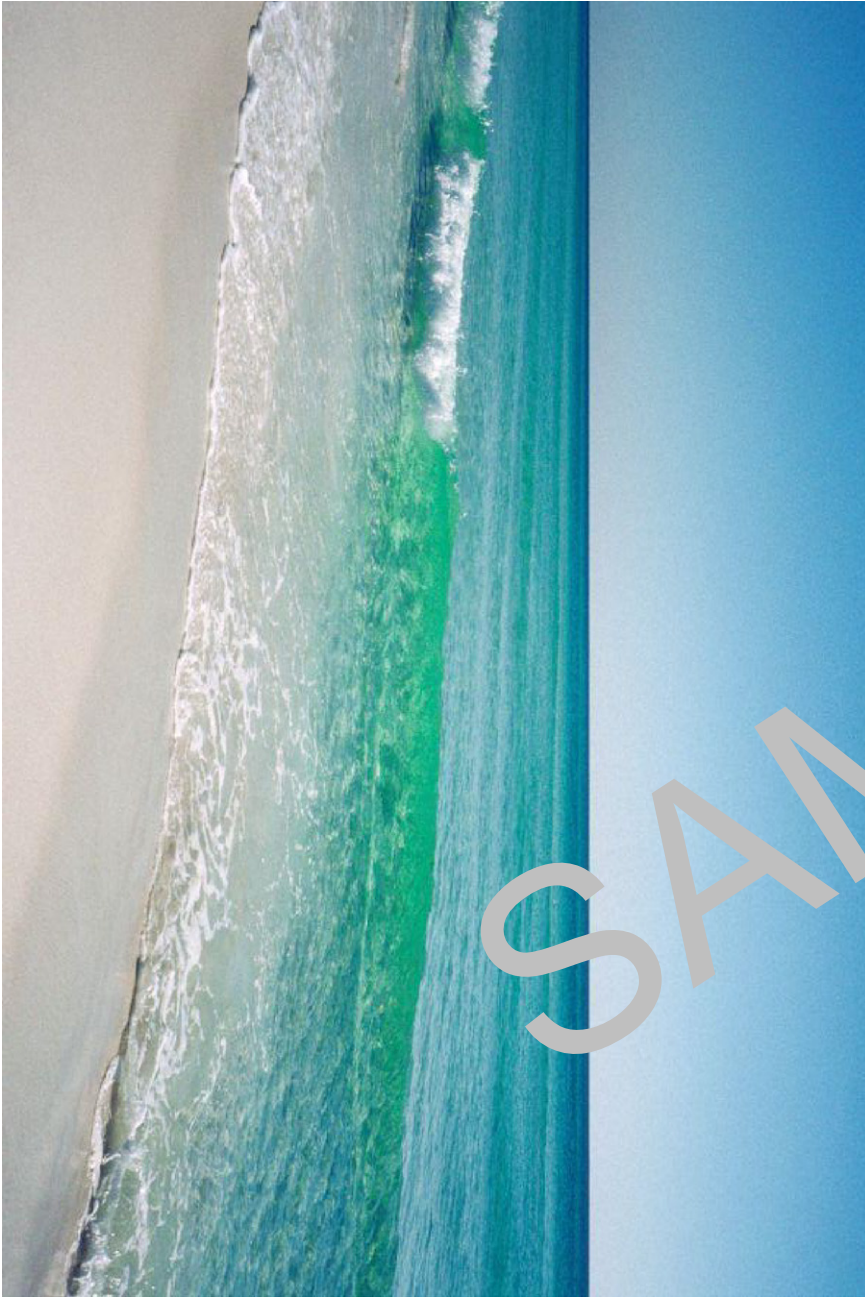




SAMPLE

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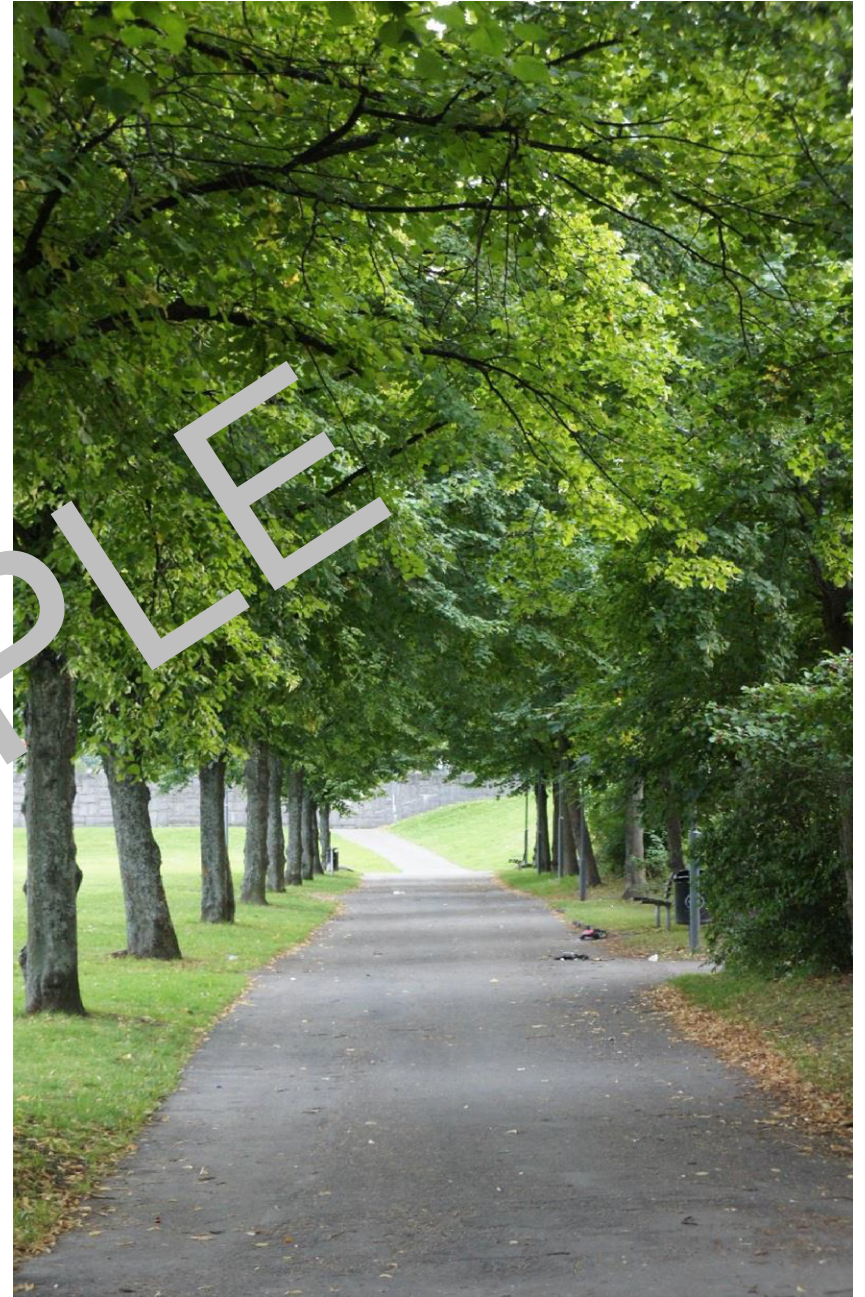
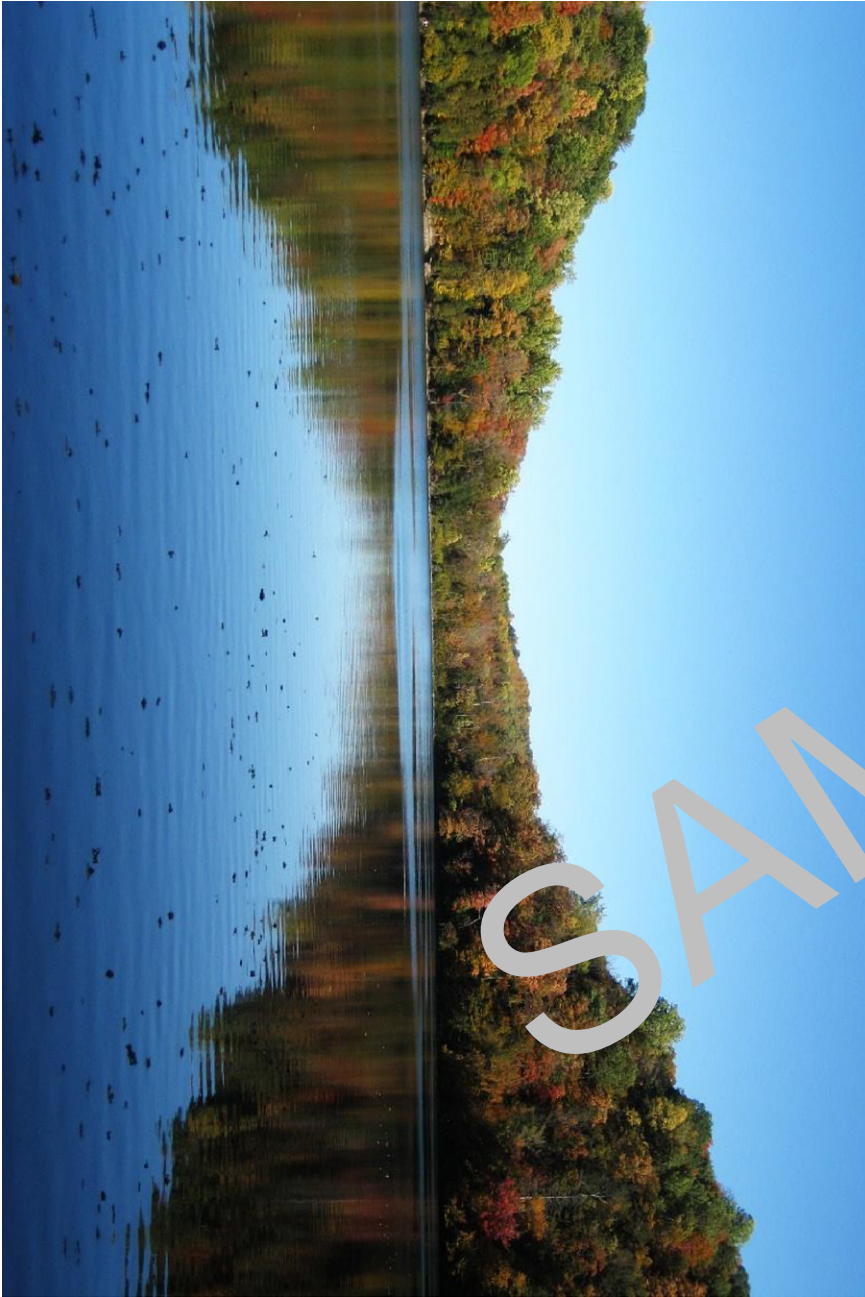




Large Nature Photograph Cards



Large Nature Photograph Cards



Large Nature Photograph Cards