



MS@home: Bringing MOUNTAIN SCHOOL to You!

During this time of school closures and stay-at-home guidelines, North Cascades Institute is sharing lessons and activities from our talented Mountain School instructors. We hope these will inspire students of all ages to continue to learn about the natural world and discover new connections to the outdoors from home.

Discover more learning adventures at ncascades.org/ms-at-home.

LESSON 1: Sit Spots

by Emily Schauble and Bridget Stuart

► **Having a sit spot is exactly as it sounds!** It is all about taking time to sit in a spot in the natural world and getting to know it better through your senses of sight, smell, hearing, and touch. This can be done in a backyard, a local park, on a balcony, or even by an open window— anywhere you can bring your attention to what's going on outside. Sit spots are enjoyable for people of all ages and can be done alone or with another person, although you should be at least 10 feet apart. Sit spots will provide you with the time and space to get to know your world on a deeper level.

- Instructions:**
- 1:** Find a comfortable location where you feel safe and content, and can sit quietly with little distraction. If you cannot find a quiet spot, that's okay! You can still utilize your other senses and watch as the natural world changes.
 - 2:** Set a timer for 10 minutes and see if you can remain still for this stretch of time. Ten minutes can seem daunting, especially if you are waiting for the unknown. To focus your time, think about the sight, sound and smell questions below. You might be surprised by how quickly the time flies.
 - 3:** Find a time to reflect on your experience afterwards in a way that is meaningful to you. Listed on page 2 are engaging suggestions for reflection.

Questions to think about while in your sit spot:

SOUNDS

- When I close my eyes, how many different sounds can I hear?
- Do the sounds I'm hearing change over the course of my sit? Do I hear more sounds or less sounds the longer I sit? Why might that be?
- Are there any sounds I can't identify? What might these sounds be?

SIGHTS

- What is something I have never noticed before about something around me?
- Whether in a rural or urban space, what evidence can I find of nature around me? What around me was made by humans?
- How could I describe one object in my sit spot to someone that is not here now?

SMELLS

- What is the most fragrant thing around me right now?
- What does this smell remind me of? A food item? A memory?
- Is the smell pleasant or unpleasant? Why might that be?

Reflecting on your experience:

This is a valuable time to look back on all of the things you noticed while in your sit spot. By looking back on this moment you may realize something that you hadn't previously (example: the birds all left and then a couple of minutes later people walked by. Maybe the birds left because they were trying to stay away from the people). This is not only a valuable time to find meaning in your observations but also save them for yourself to look at in the future (journal entry) and share them with a friend! *Continued on next page* ►

Happy Birthday Mountain School!

For 30 years, this transformational 3-day school program has taught kids that they are part of the natural world and jump-started their lifelong engagement with the environment.

Help us celebrate by sharing your Mountain School story at ncascades.org/ms30-blog



Reflection Activities for immediately afterwards or later that day:

- ▶ Use the space below to draw a 360 degree map of your sit spot and add in any details that you were excited about!
- ▶ Write a journal entry about the things you saw, smelled and heard while in your sit spot.
- ▶ If you shared a sit spot with someone, what are similarities that you noticed? How about differences?
- ▶ Compare your observations to the previous day or various times of day.
- ▶ Create a dance or play to portray the interesting moments at your sit spot to someone who was not there.

If nothing else, take the time within your sit spot to relax! Feel free to share this activity with people both close and afar. Hopefully you will find a greater connection to your space and even yourself whether you visit your sit spot just once or continue this practice for days, weeks and months henceforth.

THANK YOU

for helping us offer
these at-home lessons
for transformative
learning experiences
in nature by making
a gift at

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