

Connecting Kids to Nature

Nature is a great teacher and getting kids outside to learn and play is good for their brains and their bodies. Try this outdoor activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's safe, fun, and educational!

Sounds Around

Our ears are constantly being bombarded with sound - so much so that we automatically "tune out" a lot of it. This activity helps children "tune in" to the sounds of their environment and helps them to explore the sounds of nature.

Nature provides us with many unforgettable sounds. Breezes whistling through the leaves, birds singing early in the morning, and streams gurgling over rocks are just some of the sounds children recognize.

Sound helps animals in a number of ways. Explain to children that having ears on opposite sides of our heads enables us (and other animals) to judge the location a sound comes from. Find a safe, comfortable outdoor space where children can sit quietly. Then have them close their eyes and listen to the sounds around them for several minutes.

- Provide pencils, crayons, and paper, and ask children to make a "sound map." They can put an X in the middle of a page to represent themselves, and then use pictures or words to show the locations of the sounds around them. Encourage them to use lines to show directions and distances.
- When reviewing the sound map, ask children: *Which sounds did you like most? Least? What else did you hear? What might have caused the sounds you heard?*
- Ask children to name some animals that are active at night. *Do they have any special adaptations for seeing and hearing in the dark?* For example, foxes have large ears for picking up small sounds. Have children mimic fox ears by cutting off the bottoms of paper cups and gently fitting the cups over their ears (see example below). *How does this change what you hear? Can you add any new sounds to your map after listening with these new ears?*

Make-Your-Own Animal Ears



Make Learning Fun!

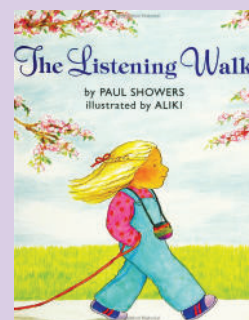
Encourage your child's school to incorporate learning outdoors.

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop, www.plt.org/state-network/
- Visit shop.plt.org

Literature Connection

Try using your hearing with *The Listening Walk*, by Paul Showers. In this book, a young girl takes a quiet walk with her father and identifies the different sounds they hear. Take your own walk and give it a try. You'll be surprised! Ages 3-6. ISBN: 9780064433228.



Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is an initiative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

www.plt.org