



NATURE JOURNALING CHALLENGE

Record your observations of nature through sketches and notes

COMPLETE AT LEAST FOUR NATURE-INSPIRED JOURNAL ENTRIES.

This challenge is designed to encourage your child to slow down, observe, and record what they see, hear, and feel in nature.

WHY START A JOURNAL?

Journaling is a powerful, quiet activity that helps children feel calm and focused while building foundational skills for school.

- **Better Focus:** Focusing on drawing a single object (like a leaf) in detail helps children concentrate and reduces anxiety.
- **Hands Get Stronger:** Drawing, tracing, and coloring are wonderful ways to practice the fine motor skills needed for writing.
- **Connect to Nature:** By drawing things they love, children build a strong connection and appreciation for the natural world.

FOR THE GROWN-UPS: SETTING UP THE JOURNAL

Nature journaling is a gentle, ongoing activity.

The Goal: Encourage your child to make at least one journal entry a month. This helps them observe the changes in nature as it goes through all four seasons and teaches them to be careful, detailed observers of the world around them.

What to Bring: You only need a few simple things!

- A small notebook with plain paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- A glue stick or tape (optional, for nature treasures)
- Your eyes, ears, hands, and heart!

Important Note: These prompts are just suggestions. If something special happens in nature that day—like a deer walking by or a giant rainbow—encourage your child to be creative and draw that instead!

SPRING: NEW LIFE EVERYWHERE

What To Do

Activity 1: The Tiny Sprout - Find a new sprout, bud, or tiny flower. Draw its shape and color. Draw a face next to it that shows how you feel about spring!

Learning Goal

Helps children think closely about how things grow and start to learn new words to describe changes in nature.

Spring Activity 2: Counting the Clouds - Lie on your back and watch the clouds float by. Draw the shape of your favorite cloud.

Develops imagination and creativity by turning a cloud into a picture.





SUMMER: HEAT AND HIDING

What To Do

Activity 1: The Cool Spot - Find a cool, shady spot (under a tree or a big bush). Draw what you see when you look up into the leaves.

Learning Goal

Encourages calmness and focus by engaging them in a quiet, mindful activity. They practice looking for detail in the shadows.

Activity 2: Wetness Watch - Find something wet outside (dew on grass, a drop of water, a wet rock). Draw the object and tell a grown-up why it feels wet.

Uses the sense of touch and texture to learn about water in the environment. Helps them use stronger words to describe their feelings and observations.

FALL: CRUNCH AND COLOR

What To Do

Activity 1: The Leaf Collection - Find three different colored leaves. Glue them onto your journal page. Draw a line from each leaf to a matching colored crayon or pencil.

Learning Goal

Boosts critical thinking by observing, comparing, and organizing objects by color and shape. Helps hands get stronger for drawing.

Activity 2: Bark Rubbing - Find a tree with bumpy bark. Lay your paper flat against the bark and rub the side of a crayon over it to make a secret picture appear!

Promotes creativity and wonder by using art to explore textures. Helps children think like a scientist about why things feel different.

WINTER: QUIET AND TRACKS

What To Do

Activity 1: Sound and Silence- Close your eyes for 30 seconds and listen to the winter quiet. What sounds do you hear? Draw a picture of the quiet space.

Learning Goal

Increases focus and listening skills by asking them to be quiet and still. Helps them use art to show what sound or quiet feels like.

Activity 2: Footprint Friends- Look for footprints or tracks in the snow or mud (preferably an animal). Copy the shape of the footprint on your page.

Encourages close observation of details and introduces the idea that animals live nearby. Helps them learn new words about animals.





WINTER ADVENTURE CHALLENGE | *Frosty Fun and Good Times Galore*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, EXPLORE THE OUTDOORS IN THE WINTER

Utah is famous around the world for its snow. However, getting outside during this season requires some creativity and determination. Discover the benefits of outdoor activities in Utah's wintry landscapes.

WHY GO OUTSIDE IN THE WINTER?

Skipping the outdoors during winter deprives your children of major benefits like increased physical activity, immune system boosts, and stress reduction. Since many common winter illnesses spread more easily indoors, getting fresh air is important for health. The American Council of Exercise recommends children get approximately 60 minutes of physical activity each day, which can easily be achieved by breaking up your outdoor play into short intervals (10 to 20 minutes of snow fun!).

ACTIVE SNOW PLAY & GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

<u>Activity</u>	<u>What To Do</u>	<u>Learning and Fitness Goal</u>
Simple Sledding & Hauling	Find a small, safe hill. Have them take turns pulling the sled up the hill (even without a passenger) to get their blood pumping. Then, enjoy the ride down!	Builds endurance, muscle strength (heavy work), and the physics of gravity and motion.
Giant Snowball Rolling	Work together to roll snowballs of different sizes. This requires pushing, lifting, and shifting their body weight to pack the snow.	Develops gross motor coordination and a sense of effort/reward for building a snowman or a snow pile.
Backyard Obstacle Course	You can build a small, snow-packed "mountain" to climb over, or shovel a maze in the snow for them to follow and run through.	This activity encourages motor planning, balancing, and a new way to explore a familiar space.
Snow Angels & Kicks	Lie back and make simple snow angels. Encourage them to practice "karate kicks" to stomp their feet into fresh snow for them to follow and run through.	This activity is fun for full-body movement and a simple way to engage different muscle groups.





SENSORY & SCIENCE WITH SNOW AND ICE

<u>Activity</u>	<u>What To Do</u>	<u>Learning and Fitness Goal</u>
Snow Painting	Fill squeeze bottles or spray bottles with water mixed with food coloring. Let your children spray the snow to create large-scale art.	Engages fine motor skills (squeezing) and introduces color mixing and how water behaves in the cold.
Ice Jewels & Treasure	Freeze water in small containers (muffin tins are great) with colorful pebbles or plastic toys inside. Take them out and let them discover the "ice jewels."	Explores the concepts of freezing/melting and is a great sensory and imaginative play activity.
DIY Bird Feeder	Roll pine cones in peanut butter (or sunbutter) and birdseed. Hang the feeder on a tree branch outside. This is a great hands-on activity!	Teaches compassion for wildlife and engages fine motor skills (spreading and rolling).
Frozen Bubble Fun	On a morning that reaches freezing or slightly below, take a bubble wand outside. See if the bubbles freeze or crystallize as they land on the cold ground.	A magical, short experience that demonstrates the science of cold and crystallization.

ALL-WEATHER EXPLORATIONS (LEARNING & OBSERVATION)

<u>Activity</u>	<u>What To Do</u>	<u>Learning and Fitness Goal</u>
Winter Tree Detective 🌲	Go for a walk and look for two types of trees. Point out the trees that are "sleeping" (bare branches) and the trees that stay "green all winter" (like pine or fir trees). Ask, "How does the sleeping tree look different from the green tree?"	A great lesson in plant adaptation and seasonal change (deciduous vs. evergreen) using simple, observable differences.
Nature Texture Hunt	Instead of colors, have your children search for different textures to touch (with gloved hands, if cold!): something smooth (ice, rock), something rough (bark), something pointy (pine needles or a stick), and something soft (moss or a dusting of snow).	This activity engages the sense of touch (sensory development) and encourages close observation of the environment's details.
Winter Cozy Picnic	Find the sunniest spot in the yard or on a patio. Bring a thermos of warm cider or soup (lukewarm for the kids) and sit down together for a short, outdoor break.	Creates a positive, cozy memory associated with being outside in the cold and provides warmth from the inside out.
Wildlife Watching	Sit quietly at a window or outside. Look for birds, squirrels, or other animals. Put out a simple bird feeder to attract feathered visitors.	This activity fosters patience, quiet observation, and an appreciation for how animals adapt to winter.





WINTER GAMES CHALLENGE | *Channel Your Inner Olympian*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, PARTICIPATE IN A WINTER SPORT

This challenge is designed to get your child excited about winter sports and outdoor play! Utah is getting ready for the 2034 Winter Olympic Games, and these fun activities will help your child feel like a real winter athlete!

WHY PLAY IN THE WINTER?

Winter play is essential for sensory and physical development!

- **Gross Motor Skills:** Pushing snow, pulling a sled, and balancing develop large muscle groups and coordination.
- **Sensory Input:** Feeling the cold, wet texture of snow provides unique sensory input that helps children focus and regulate their bodies.
- **Simple Science:** Children discover basic physics (sliding, friction, melting) just by playing!

● CRITICAL SAFETY WARNINGS ●

Winter fun requires warm layers and constant checks for cold. Please follow these safety rules at all times:

- **Dress Warmly:** Always wear layers, waterproof gloves, hats, and warm boots.
- **Check Fingers and Toes:** Be very aware of your child's fingers, toes, and nose. If they start feeling cold, get inside and warm up immediately! Keep the activity fun and pleasant; avoid having a bad experience because they got too cold!
- **Sledding Safety:** Only sled on gentle slopes that are free of trees, rocks, and roads. Always walk up the side of the hill, not the sledding path.
- **Ice Safety:** NEVER walk on frozen ponds or lakes in Utah. It is rarely cold enough for the ice to be safe and solid. Stay away from large sheets of ice unless supervised in a certified ice rink. If visiting an ice rink, ask about their loaner helmets and skating trainers—they make learning safe and easy!





SLEDDING OLYMPICS

What To Do

At a safe, gentle snow hill: Help your child pull their own sled (great heavy work!) up the hill.

For safety and fun: A trusted adult or older sibling should accompany a younger preschooler down the hill.

Learning Goal

Develops strong muscles (gross motor skills) and coordination. It encourages bravery by trying thrilling speed and sliding.

For older preschoolers: Teach them how to lean their bodies side to side to help steer the sled slightly and how to put a foot down to slow down or stop.

SNOW FORT BUILDERS

What To Do

Work as a team to build something big out of snow, like a small wall, a giant snowball, or a cozy snow fort. Use small shovels and buckets, or just your hands, to pack the snow tightly. Have your child help pat and smooth the final creation.

Learning Goal

Builds teamwork and sharing as children work together to lift and stack snow. Shaping the snow helps strengthen hands for small motor skills.

SNOW PUCK PRACTICE (LIKE HOCKEY)

What To Do

Make a puck: Pack a snowball very tightly into a hard disk (a puck). Give your child a broom, a plastic hockey stick, or a safe sturdy branch. Have them gently tap or push the "puck" along the flat snow toward a goal (like a bucket or a stick).

Learning Goal

Improves hand-eye coordination and gross motor skills (swinging the stick). It introduces the fun of a classic winter sport!

ICE BLOCKING (THE DESERT SLIDERS)

What To Do

No snow? No problem! Find a grassy hill that isn't too steep. Put your child on a large, smooth block of ice (often found at grocery stores or convenience stores) wrapped in a towel. Have them slide down the hill on the block! They can practice sitting, or even try sliding a small toy down the block.

Learning Goal

Provides the fun of sliding and speed, even without snow! It is a great way to learn about friction (the slipperiness of ice).





FOLLOW A TRAIL CHALLENGE | *One step at a time*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, FOLLOW A TRAIL

This challenge is designed to help your preschooler discover the joy of nature, build fundamental safety skills, and engage in physical activity while exploring Utah's beautiful trails.

WHY HIT THE TRAIL?

Hiking and nature walks provide an excellent opportunity for active family time, which is vital for physical and mental well-being. Getting outside builds strong muscles and endurance, and the varied terrain of a trail improves motor planning and balance. For preschoolers, the outdoors is the ultimate sensory classroom, helping them develop observation skills and a lifelong appreciation for nature.

PACING GUIDE FOR PRESCHOOLERS

For successful, complaint-free hikes, focus on time spent exploring rather than distance covered. A general rule of thumb for this age is that kids can comfortably hike about 1/2 mile per year of age.

- **4-year-old:** Target distance up to 2 miles round-trip.
- **5-year-old:** Target distance up to 2.5 miles round-trip.

Remember: these are *maximums* for a good day. Always be prepared to turn around sooner! The adventure is in the journey, not the destination.

The American Council on Exercise recommends that children get approximately 60 minutes of physical activity each day, which can be broken into short intervals.

TRAIL & SAFETY PREPARATION SKILLS

These activities use role-playing and hands-on preparation to build confidence and teach essential safety habits before you even step onto the trail.

What To Do

Whistle Practice & Lost Drill: Explain that the **whistle** is a tool for emergencies, not a toy. Practice the "Stop, Stay, Blow" rule. Role-play: Have your child hide, call their name, and have them blow the whistle repeatedly until you find them.

Learning Goal

Teaches a critical personal safety skill and promotes an immediate response to emergency calls (auditory processing).

DIY Trail Mix: Work together to choose ingredients like dried fruit, seeds, cereal, and small crackers. Let your child scoop and mix them into a small baggie for their pack.

Develops fine motor skills (scooping/pouring) and teaches the importance of bringing trail fuel (nutrition/planning).





TRAIL & SAFETY PREPARATION SKILLS

What To Do

Learning Goal

Map & Trail Markers: Look at a simple trail map together (even a hand-drawn one). Point out and look for trail markers (signs, cairns, ribbons) on a short walk. Ask them, "Which way does the arrow point?"

Introduces basic navigation skills and symbol recognition for following directions.

The "I've Got My 10" Checklist:

Adult Responsibility: Review the "10 Essentials" (like map, water, extra layers, first aid) that the adult must have. **Child Involvement:** Let your child carry a few non-essential items in a backpack (e.g., their snack, a bottle of water, a hat, a small stuffed animal).

Encourages memory, responsibility, and the planning habit of checking their pack before a trip while ensuring adult safety preparedness is the priority.

ACTIVE & GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

What To Do

Learning Goal

These activities turn a simple hike into a fun, full-body workout that builds strength and coordination on varied Utah terrain.

Picnic on the Trail: Hike to a comfortable picnic spot. If your child is interested, have them help choose non-perishable food items and pack them into the backpack before you leave. Sit and enjoy the reward!

Provides a motivational goal for the hike, teaches planning, and helps build endurance for the round-trip journey.

Trail Jumps & Leaps: Find flat, safe sections of trail. Mark off distances with sticks and encourage them to jump over a stick, leap from one spot to another, or step high over small roots or rocks.

Develops leg muscle strength, balance, and motor planning by adjusting their stride to the terrain.

"Color Match" Hiking: As you hike, challenge your child to look for specific colors in the landscape: something red (rock/flower), something brown (bark/dirt), something green (leaf/moss).

Encourages close observation, attention to detail, and simple color identification while walking.

TRAIL WISDOM & GOOD STEWARDSHIP

These activities and tips are designed to enhance the experience for your preschooler and teach your family how to be respectful, responsible visitors on Utah's trails.

What To Do

Learning Goal

Go at Their Pace (Fun, Not Distance): Be prepared to stop often! Let your child set the pace and lead the way. A 10-minute walk with three fun stops is a better success than a forced 30-minute march.

Encouraging self-regulation and ensuring the experience is positive builds a lasting love for hiking.

Incorporate Mini-Goals: Before setting off, agree on small destinations along the trail, like "the big tree," "the funny-looking rock," or "the bridge." Celebrate the achievement when you reach it.

Provides visual motivation (the end is always in sight!) and teaches the concept of breaking a larger goal into manageable parts.





STARRY SKIES CHALLENGE | *Twinkle, tiwnkle!*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, EXPLORE THE NIGHT SKY.

Spending time outdoors after sunset offers unique benefits for your children, including **sensory development** (the cool air, quiet sounds, and light/shadow contrast), **bonding and connection** (sharing quiet moments under the stars), and sparking **curiosity** ("What do you see?" or "How does the moon make you feel?")

DIRECT SKY OBSERVATION (LOOK UP & WONDER)

These activities focus on simply looking at the sky and encouraging observation.

Activity

What To Do

Learning Goal

General Observation

Go outside for a few minutes, look up, and ask simple questions like, "Do you see the big, bright moon?" or "How does the moon make you feel?"

The most crucial step! Fosters simple awe and makes the night sky feel special and comfortable.

Night Sky in the City

Find a spot in your yard or on a balcony. Point out the moon and any visible stars. Talk about how the city lights make the sky look different.

Teaches them to observe their immediate surroundings, wherever they are.

Moon Tracker

Each night, go outside and find the moon. Draw a simple picture of its shape in a journal.

Introduces simple pattern recognition and the concept that the moon changes slightly over time (the lunar cycle).

Cloud Gazing by Day

Spend time looking at the clouds during the day. Ask, "What shapes do you see?"

Builds the fundamental skill of observation and looking for patterns to apply to the stars at night.





FUN WITH LIGHT & SHADOW (COMFORT IN THE DARK)

Activity

What To Do

Learning Goal

Flashlight Walk

Provide each child with their own flashlight and go for a very short walk around the yard or neighborhood.

Gives the child a sense of control and agency in the dark, turning a potentially scary environment into an exciting, magical place.

Shadow Puppets

Use a flashlight or headlamp to cast shadows of objects or hands onto a wall, tent, or fence.

A hands-on way to play with the concepts of light and shadow in a safe, fun, and interactive way.

Star Jar

Take a clear jar with glow-in-the-dark stars inside. Let it "charge" in the light. Put it in their room at bedtime.

It offers a portable, personal, and calming night sky that connects outdoor fun to the comfort of their room.

EXPLORING THE NATURAL WORLD (BEYOND THE STARS)

Activity

What To Do

Learning Goal

Nature's Night Sounds Concert

Sit quietly on a blanket for 5-10 minutes. Close your eyes and focus on listening for crickets, owls, or rustling leaves.

Fosters comfort by emphasizing that the night is full of life and gentle sounds, not just silence.

Night Hikes for Wildlife

Take a very short, slow walk at dusk. Use a light to look for nocturnal animals like moths, crickets, or worms.

This activity combines simple outdoor observation with wildlife watching, deepening their connection to nature.

Make Constellation "Dots"

On dark paper, use a white crayon to draw a few dots and connect them with a line.

A simple, creative introduction to the idea of constellations (patterns in the sky) without the pressure of finding them in the real sky.





CAMPING CHALLENGE | *Take your home outdoors*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, LEAVE THE INDOORS BEHIND

This challenge is designed to introduce your child to the excitement of camping, with a focus on comfort, creativity, and simple discovery. Our goal is to make camping activities a source of joy and imagination, fostering positive associations with the outdoors while building fundamental skills.

SIMPLE CAMPSITE FUN & IMAGINATION (BUILDING COMFORT)

These activities introduce the foundational elements of camping through fun and play, perfect for the backyard or living room.

What To Do

Learning Goal

Indoor Camping Adventure: Build a cozy fort using blankets, pillows, and furniture inside. Spend the evening reading nature books by flashlight, singing silly songs, or telling stories.

Fosters imagination and connects the comfort of home with the concept of a "campsite."

Backyard Basecamp Play: Set up a small tent, a homemade tent (blanket/sheet over chairs), or use your camper/RV. Your child can use it as a "clubhouse" during the day for picnics, naps, or playing with stuffed animals.

Introduces the shelter as a safe, fun space without the commitment of an overnight stay.

"Campfire" Story Time: Create a pretend fire using red, yellow, and orange tissue paper inside a circle of rocks or sticks. Dim the lights and share stories or sing camping songs around your safe "fire."

Develops creativity and teaches fire safety concepts (e.g., "stay close," "don't touch") in a controlled setting.

The Great Sleepout Prep: Practice getting into a sleeping bag on the floor (in your tent or camper). Teach them to zip and unzip their bag by themselves.

Builds self-help skills and prepares them for the physical routine of camping later on.

OUTDOOR COOKING & ESSENTIALS

These activities focus on the exciting, sensory experience of making and eating food outdoors and practicing good stewardship.

What To Do

Learning Goal

Campfire Treat (Adult-Led): Make a simple treat using an outdoor grill, fire pit, or portable stove. You can cook foil packets with bananas and chocolate chips, or classic s'mores.

Focuses on following instructions and safety rules. It's also a sensory experience of smell and taste in nature.





OUTDOOR COOKING & ESSENTIALS

What To Do

Camp Snack Packing: Give your child a small backpack. Help them fill a water bottle and choose two snacks for an outdoor adventure.

Teaches responsibility and the concept of packing essentials for a short trip.

Skewer Fun! Show your child how to thread fruit pieces (like grapes or bananas) onto a kid-safe wooden skewer for an outdoor snack. No cooking needed!

Develops fine motor skills and makes eating healthy items feel like a special camping activity.

"Leave No Trace" Critter Game: Before going inside or to bed, have your children help you clean up all crumbs, wrappers, and safely store food items away from the campsite.

Teaches stewardship and the importance of keeping food away from wildlife to protect both animals and the camp.

TIPS FOR A HAPPY LITTLE CAMPER (COMFORT & EASE)

These practical suggestions will help you make camping stress-free and enjoyable for your preschooler.

Tips for Parents

Bring Comfort Items: Pack a favorite stuffed animal, blanket, or pillow from home.

Maintain the Routine: Stick as closely as possible to their regular meal and bedtime schedule.

Give a "Job": Assign simple, important tasks like holding the flashlight on a night walk or zipping the tent door.

Take a Practice Nap: If you're planning an overnight trip, take a 20-minute nap in the tent or camper during the day before trying to sleep there at night.

Pack the Right Gear: Dress them in warm, layered pajamas and a cozy hat for sleeping, even if it feels warm at bedtime.

Why it Works for Preschoolers

Having familiar items makes a new environment (like a tent) feel safe and secure for sleep.

Predictability reduces anxiety and meltdowns in a new setting.

This builds their confidence and sense of importance.

This familiarizes them with the sounds and shadows.

Young children can become cold quickly overnight.





WATER DISCOVERY CHALLENGE | *Make a splash!*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, EXPLORE WATER

This challenge is designed to safely introduce your child to the magic of water in our environment—whether it's a creek, a pond, or a lake shore. They will learn to observe how water moves and supports life, laying the groundwork for understanding science and conservation.

WHY EXPLORE WATER?

Water exploration is key to early development!

- **Hands-On Science:** Observing what floats and sinks or how water moves is the foundation of scientific thinking and prediction.
- **Sensory Input:** The sounds, temperatures, and feelings of water are calming and help children focus and regulate their emotions.
- **Counting and Math:** Water play naturally involves scooping, pouring, filling, and measuring, which builds early mathematical understanding.

Indoor Access Note: *Don't have a creek nearby? Visit an indoor water experience, like an aquarium with a touch pool. Public splash pads and swimming pools are also great places to learn about water. Focus on the details.*

● CRITICAL SAFETY WARNINGS ●

Water is fun, but requires careful attention. Please follow these safety rules at all times:

- **NEVER** leave a child unattended near water, even for a moment.
- **Fast Water:** Keep children away from fast-moving creeks or rivers, especially during spring runoff. The current can be deceptively strong.
- **Wear a Life Jacket:** When near deep water, on a dock, or in a boat, your child must wear a correctly fitted life jacket. Many state parks offer free loaner programs.

WHAT FLOATS, WHAT SINKS? (WATER'S EDGE OR BRIDGE)

What To Do

At the safe edge of water (creek, puddle) or from a safe spot on a pedestrian bridge: Help your child gently drop small natural items they find (a leaf, a small stick, a rock, a pinecone) into the water.

Learning Goal

Develops **scientific thinking** by encouraging prediction. It builds early **math skills** (counting and comparison: "This is heavy, this is light"). Before dropping each item, ask: "What do you think will happen? Will it float or sink?"





THE RIPPLES AND REFLECTIONS

What To Do

Find a safe spot by the water and be very quiet. Use your eyes to look for anything that moves! Can you spot **fish, a frog, water bugs skimming the surface, or birds?**

Notice how creatures move, like the way a swallow swoops to catch a bug!

Draw a picture in the sand or on a page showing the wildlife you saw. If you see two ducks, draw two dots on your page.

Learning Goal

Improves focus and observation skills by asking them to be still and quiet.

Trusted Adults: If you don't know the name of the creature, use a wildlife app like **iNaturalist** to find out! Helps children learn new words about water animals and the homes they build near the water.

LOOKING AT LIFE BELOW THE SURFACE

What To Do

Use a tool: Bring a small, clear container (like a clear plastic bucket or jar) to the water's edge. Gently submerge the container near the edge, or fill it with clear water. Look through the side of the container. Can you spot any tiny plants, shadows of fish, or interesting underwater rocks?

Learning Goal

Develops **scientific thinking** by using a tool to investigate a hidden place. Encourages *patience and focus* while searching the underwater environment. Helps children *think closely* about life underwater, strengthening their observation skills.

LITERACY CONNECTION

Trusted Adults: Boost the underwater fun by looking for a picture book at your library!

You can start with these titles and get more recommendations from your librarian:

- [Over and Under the Pond](#) by Kate Messner
- [Beyond the Pond](#) by Joseph Kuefler
- [The Little Raindrop](#) by Joanna Gray
- [At The Pond \(Paws, Fins, Feathers, Claws\)](#) by David Elliott





OBSERVE WILDLIFE CHALLENGE | *Whooo's there?*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, OBSERVE WILDLIFE

This challenge is designed to safely introduce your child to the fascinating world of animals—both big and small—that live all around us. They will learn the skills of quiet searching and patient observation, which are the foundations of both science and mindfulness.

WHY OBSERVE WILDLIFE?

Wildlife observation is key to early development and fun!

- **Observation Skills:** Looking closely for clues like nests, holes, or feathers helps children think and notice small details in the world around them.
- **Calmness and Focus:** Being quiet and still while searching for animals teaches patience and helps children focus, which is wonderful for emotional well-being.
- **Empathy:** Learning where animals live and how they survive helps children develop a stronger connection to nature and a desire to protect it.

Wildlife Center Access Note: *If you cannot reach a natural wild area, try visiting a botanical garden, aviary, or nature center. Many nature centers and gardens in Utah participate in Museums for All, providing free or discounted admission for people receiving food assistance (SNAP benefits).*

● CRITICAL SAFETY WARNINGS ●

Observing wildlife requires respect and distance. Please follow these safety rules at all times:

- **Keep Your Distance:** Never approach, feed, or touch wild animals, no matter how small or friendly they appear. This is for both your safety and the animal's well-being.
- **Stay on the Trail:** Staying on marked paths protects the plants and keeps you safe from stepping on small creatures' homes.
- **Leave No Trace:** Only take pictures, only leave footprints. Leave everything exactly as you found it.

THE ANIMALS CLUE HUNT

What To Do

Go outside and look for things animals leave behind! Can you find a feather, a chewed-up nut or seed, a hole in the ground, or a piece of shed snake skin? You might even spot a quick-running lizard on a desert trail! **(Trusted adults: Do not let children touch or pick up animal scat.)**

Choose one: Draw a picture of the clue you found and the animal you think it came from *OR* Move like the animal! How would it walk or hop?

Learning Goal

Develops scientific thinking by encouraging children to use clues (inference). It helps children think closely about what an animal does and what it eats.





THE CRITTER HOME SEARCH

What To Do

Look up into the trees for nests (like squirrel dreys or bird nests) or holes. Look down under rocks (have a trusted adult turn over the rock carefully) or under logs for bug homes.

After you find a home, tell a grown-up all the ways it keeps the animal safe.

For Older Preschoolers: They may want to draw a picture of the animal's home in their Nature Journal!

Learning Goal

Helps children learn new words about animal homes (such as nests, burrows, and webs) and understand how they protect animals.

This activity improves focus and observation skills by searching in different directions (up and down) and talking about what you find.

Why We Are Careful: The animal's home keeps it safe, warm, and hidden, just like your house keeps you safe and cozy. We leave the home alone so the animal can feel safe when it comes back.

THE QUIET GAME (LISTEN FOR WILDLIFE)

What To Do

Practice using quiet feet to sneak to your comfortable sitting spot. Sit very, very still for one minute. Close your eyes and listen only for animal sounds (chirps, buzzing, wind, crunching leaves).

After one minute, point to where the sound came from. Tell a grown-up what kind of sound it was (e.g., "A bird made a cheep-cheep sound!" or a squirrel made a kuk-kuk-kuk sound!)

Learning Goal

Encourages calmness and focus through quiet stillness. Helps children connect to nature through hearing and patience.

THE GENTLE INSECT CATCH

What To Do

With a trusted adult watching, gently try to catch a safe insect like a pill bug (aka "roly-poly bug), grasshopper, ladybug, or caterpillar using a small clear cup, a jar, or your hands.

Observe the insect closely for a couple of minutes. What color is it? How does it move? Then, carefully lift the cup and let it go back to its home!

Learning Goal

Teaches respect and empathy for small creatures. It improves fine motor skills (using a gentle touch) and concentration.

LITERACY CONNECTION

Trusted Adults: Learn more about wildlife by looking for a picture book at your library!

You can start with these titles and get more recommendations from your librarian:

- [A Nest is Noisy](#) by Diana Hutts
- [Over and Under the Snow](#) by Kate Messner





UTAH ROCKS! CHALLENGE | *And so do you!*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, EXPLORE UTAH'S GEOLOGY

Preschoolers are naturally curious about rocks, which sparks their interest through hands-on exploration, this Adventure promotes climbing, touching and exploring rocks of all shapes and sizes!

WHY CLIMBING?

Climbing is a natural part of a young child's development, fueling their need for exploration, physical growth, and skill-building. Risky play, such as climbing, is crucial for 3 to 5-year-olds because it builds essential skills in physical development, cognitive function, and emotional regulation.

CLIMBING SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS

Parents should strike a balance between close supervision and allowing for some thoughtfully considered risk, which facilitates a necessary growth of independence. These guidelines apply to all climbing, scrambling, and rock exploration activities for children aged 3-5.

- **Provide a Safe Environment:** Ensure the climbing structure (boulder or playground) is age-appropriate and hazard-free. Before climbing, verify the boulder is stable, and the landing zone is clear of sharp objects or jagged rocks.
- **Boulder Height Rule:** Only allow climbing on natural boulders that are no taller than the child's chest or waist.
- **Footwear:** Always ensure the child is wearing closed-toe shoes with good grip (sturdy sneakers or hiking shoes).
- **Supervise Safely:** Maintain close proximity and keep your child in sight, ready to intervene, but resist the urge to hover or intervene immediately if they are safe.
- **Promote Problem-Solving:** Observe from a short distance to allow your child a chance to solve a problem on their own, building confidence.
- **Talk About Risk:** Promote thoughtful decision-making by asking reflective questions like, "How did that feel?" or "What's a safer way to do that?"
- **Climb Down, Not Jump:** Teach the child to descend feet-first, facing the rock, feeling for footholds to prevent injury.

ROCK CLIMBING

What To Do

Indoor Climbing: Visit a gym that offers bouldering (low-wall climbing on thick pads, no ropes needed), auto-belays, or classes for 3 to 5-year-olds, providing a safe, supervised environment.

Playground Rock Wall: Use a low, safe rock-climbing wall at a local park or playground.

Nature's Boulders: Find a large, stable, and low boulder (no taller than the child) in a safe, flat area of a park.

Learning Goal

Motor Planning & Whole-Body Strength: Plan a short route by visually identifying the next hold, while using leg-pushing and arm-pulling to support body weight.

Goal Orientation & Grip Strength: Successfully climb from bottom to top, building a sense of accomplishment and increasing hand and finger strength by gripping holds.

Risk Assessment & Balance: Learn to safely test the stability of a surface before committing weight to it, improving body centering while traversing the top of the object.





SAFE MOVEMENT & EXPLORATION

What To Do

Rock Exploration Hikes: Plan a short, kid-friendly hike to discover unique formations, such as exploring a simple, wide slot canyon (like Willis Creek or Little Wild Horse Canyon—hike a manageable distance and then turn back), viewing canyon walls, or fun red rock scrambles (like those found in Snow Canyon State Park).

Make the Most of Visiting Geological Landmarks: Visit a natural landmark known for unique rock structures or accessible areas for safe play, such as Goblin Valley (free-roaming valley floor), Bryce Canyon (viewing hoodoos from paved Rim Trail), or Coral Pink Sand Dunes (sand-dune scrambling).

Learning Goal

Coordination & Body Control: Improve navigation of uneven outdoor terrain by using careful hand and foot placement for stability, and learn to describe textures (rough, smooth, hard).

Observation & Agility: Increase **unstructured running and whole-body movement** for vigorous activity, while building visual discrimination skills by comparing and describing the unique rock shapes (e.g., hoodoos, arches)

HANDS-ON & SENSORY FUN

What To Do

Simple Rock Collecting: Go on a simple nature walk to collect pretty pebbles or rocks. Use a magnifying glass to inspect and sort your finds. (Check local collection rules where applicable.)

Fossil Finders: Go on a gentle hike to view fossil remains or visit a museum with a simulated fossil dig experience. Look, do not touch or remove fossils.

Petroglyph Pointers: Take a short, easy hike to view ancient rock carvings (petroglyphs) at one of the many sites located throughout Utah, particularly in the canyons and deserts.

Learning Goal

Comparison & Strength: Collect and sort objects by a simple property (e.g., color like red or gray, or weight like light or heavy), while building strength from carefully lifting and carrying their collection

Historical Awareness & Motor Skills: Understand the concept of "long ago" and practice squatting, kneeling, and using small tools (brush/scoop) to gently explore the ground.

Cultural Respect & Quiet Movement: Understand the importance of **NEVER** touching or writing on rock art to preserve these irreplaceable artifacts, while practicing walking gently and quietly along a path.

STEM & DISCOVERY

What To Do

Ranger Rock Talk: Attend a geology or paleontology talk/tour led by a park ranger or expert at a National/State Park.

Museum Marvels: Visit a museum with geology or paleontology exhibits. Bring a nature journal to sketch a favorite rock or fossil. *Many museums in Utah participate in Museums for All, providing free or discounted admission for people receiving food assistance (SNAP benefits).*

Learning Goal

Cognitive Focus & Endurance: Increase the ability to focus and listen for 10–20 minutes, while learning 1–2 new facts about rocks or mountains.

Observation & Fine Motor Skills: Sort and describe objects based on a single, simple attribute (like color or size), while developing pencil grip and fine motor control through sketching.





UTAH'S WILD PLACES CHALLENGE | *Look, listen, leave no trace*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, SPEND TIME IN A WILD PLACE

This challenge is designed to introduce your child to the amazing variety of Utah's landscapes—from red desert sand to tall alpine forests. Whether you visit a State Park, a National Forest, or a "wildish" corner of a city park, you are exploring a special place!

WHY EXPLORE WILD PLACES?

Exploring big and small wild places is key to building wonder and awareness!

- **Awe and Wonder:** Seeing big, amazing places (like canyons or mountains) builds a powerful sense of wonder and connection to the vastness of nature.
- **Landscape Awareness:** Children learn that Utah is full of many different kinds of places—some are sandy and rocky (desert), and some are soft and green (forest).
- **Observation Skills:** Searching for specific colors, shapes, and textures unique to each place helps children think closely and notice small details.

● **SAEFTY FIRST** ●

Exploring new landscapes requires special care. Please follow these safety rules at all times:

- **Stay with a Trusted Adult:** Never wander off, even in a park. Hold a grown-up's hand or stay within arm's reach at all times.
- **Stay Hydrated: Utah is dry!** Bring plenty of water and drink often, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- **Stay on the Path:** On trails, stay on the marked path. This protects both the delicate plants and you!

THE DESERT TEXTURE MAP

What To Do

If you are in a dry, desert, or canyon area, focus on finding different **rocky textures** and **sandy colors**. Use a crayon to do a rubbing on a safe, loose rock. Find a sandy spot and draw a picture in the sand with a stick.

Learning Goal

Develops **scientific thinking** by encouraging children to compare textures. Helps them learn that different environments (desert vs. forest) have different kinds of materials.

THE TALL TREE LOOK-UP

What To Do

Find a tall tree in the park or forest. Look all the way up to the very top! How tall is it? Talk about the ground. Is the ground here soft with pine needles, or hard and covered in dirt? Draw the shape of the top of the tree on a page in your nature journal.

Learning Goal

Builds **awe and wonder** when looking at large natural objects. It helps children practice observing scale and size (tall, short).





MY TINY WILD PLACE

What To Do

Find the smallest spot in your local park, backyard, or neighborhood that feels "wild." This could be a large bush, a messy cluster of weeds, or a big, bumpy rock. Draw a simple map showing how to get to your tiny wild place. What color is the ground? What animal might hide there?

Learning Goal

Teaches children that wild places are everywhere! It boosts imagination and creativity by letting them decide what makes a spot wild.

THE ROCK SHADOW HUNT

What To Do

At a safe rocky area or canyon where the sun is shining, look for the shadows created by the rocks. Draw a simple map showing how to get to your tiny wild place. What color is the ground? What animal might hide there? Is the shadow big or small? Is it dark or light? Find two rocks and safely stack them (a small one on a bigger one). Watch the shadow your new rock tower makes!

Learning Goal

Introduces the concept of light and shadow and how they change shapes. It helps children think closely about geological shapes and the sun.

LITERACY CONNECTION

Trusted Adults: Look for picture books that focus on being in a big place (awe) and celebrate diverse geological environments.

You can start with these titles and get more recommendations from your librarian:

- [Hello Ocean](#): by Pam Muñoz Ryan / Mark Astrella
- [Rocks, Rivers, and the Weather](#): by Tish Rabe / Aristides Ruiz
- [Up in the Mountain](#): by Germano Zullo / Albertine
- [Draw the Circle Wide](#): by Christy Hale





PLANT DISCOVERY CHALLENGE | *What's growing?*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, GET ACQUAINTED WITH UTAH'S PLANTS

This challenge is designed to help your preschooler discover the amazing world of plants, understand where food comes from, and engage in hands-on stewardship in their own backyard or local park.

WHY DIG IN?

Gardening and plant exploration offer unique sensory and educational experiences.

- Working with soil, water, and seeds **develops fine motor skills** and **hand-eye coordination**.
- Caring for a living plant teaches **responsibility, patience, and the fundamental concept** of life cycles.
- Furthermore, a simple planting activity can **connect children to the source of their food** and foster a lifelong appreciation for the environment.

PLANT AND LIFE CYCLE SKILLS

These activities offer hands-on experience with the process of growth, from seed to sprout.

What To Do

Learning Goal

My Tiny Seed Project: Plant a large, fast-growing seed (like a bean or squash) in a cup with soil. Help your child water it and find a sunny spot. Check it daily for the first tiny green sprout!

Teaches the life cycle of a plant, encourages patience, and practices fine motor skills (scooping soil, gentle watering).

The Potted Herb Garden: Purchase or grow a small herb plant like mint or basil. Have your child gently pinch off leaves for a meal (such as spaghetti sauce or salad). Talk about the smell and taste!

Engages smell and taste senses, introduces the concept of harvesting, and teaches care for a perennial plant.

Watering & Weeding Crew: Give your child a small watering can (or spray bottle) to care for an outdoor plant or small section of a garden. Show them how to gently pull out weeds (not the flowers!) from the soil.

Develops responsibility and nurturing skills while improving fine motor control and identification of desired plants.

Dig and Plant a Flower: Give your child a small trowel or spoon and help them dig a shallow hole in a garden bed or flowerpot. Let them gently place a flower (or seedling) in the hole and cover the roots with soil.

Develops gross motor skills (digging, squatting) and teaches the proper technique for planting and caring for established plants.





PLANT OBSERVATION & GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

These activities get children moving and actively observing plants in a yard, park, or managed green space.

What To Do

Learning Goal

Leaf Collection Fun: Find and collect 3–5 different types of fallen leaves. Look for differences in color, shape, and size. Use a crayon and paper for a rubbing to keep!

Encourages close observation for comparing and contrasting, and develops artistic creativity.

Wildflower Scavenger Hunt: Go on a designated walk (desert in spring, mountains in summer). Look for specific colors (red paintbrush, yellow mule's ears) or shapes (bell-shaped columbine). Ask, "Which is the smallest/biggest?"

Encourages seasonal observation and simple identification (color/shape) while building endurance for a focused walk.

The Tree Detective: Find a small, safe tree. Gently touch the trunk and describe the bark (rough, bumpy, smooth). Look up at the branches and talk about how tall the tree is compared to them.

Builds vocabulary (texture words) and introduces the concept of scale/height while fostering respect for large natural objects.

Wetland Wonders: Visit a safe, accessible pond, wetland, or stream. Look for plants that grow in the water, like cattails, rushes, or lily pads. Describe their size and shape.

Introduces aquatic ecosystems, improves balance on uneven banks, and expands knowledge of plant habitats.

The Tiny World Search: On a log, rock, or tree trunk, search for bright green moss, colorful crusty lichens, or (if present) mushrooms/toadstools! (Adults: Remember the "Look, Don't Touch" rule).

Engages close-up vision and teaches children about the unique, small, non-flowering members of the plant/fungi kingdom.

Garden Adventure Day: Visit a local public garden, arboretum, or greenhouse. Walk through a display, follow a path, and look for the biggest flower, the tallest tree, or the strangest-looking plant.
Many nature centers and gardens in Utah participate in Museums for All, providing free or discounted admission for people receiving food assistance (SNAP benefits).

Provides a structured walking goal (gross motor), introduces plant diversity, and helps kids adapt to a new environment.

PLANT WISDOM & GOOD STEWARDSHIP

These activities and tips are designed to enhance your preschooler's experience and teach your family to be respectful, responsible visitors in all green spaces.

What To Do

Learning Goal

Look, Don't Touch (or Taste!): Before exploring, explain to your child that we never touch, pick, or taste unknown plants, berries, or mushrooms. Teach them to only touch plants the adult has identified as safe.

Teaches personal safety and foundational respect for potentially poisonous or protected plants in the environment.

Plant as a Friend: Talk about how plants help us—they give us food, provide shade, and make the air fresh. Have your child gently "pat" a plant or tree and thank it for its gifts.

Fosters empathy and a positive, caring relationship with the natural world.





NATURE MINDFULNESS CHALLENGE | *Use your senses to connect to nature*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, PRACTICE MINDFULNESS OUTDOORS

All activities in this challenge are meant to be completed outdoors; in your own backyard, a nearby park or nature center, or on our beautiful public lands. The natural world—from a single patch of grass to a towering forest—transforms into a gentle classroom ready to engage all five senses.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness means paying attention to what you are thinking and feeling in the moment.

- Being present in nature can encourage creativity, focus, and a sense of wonder for the natural world.
- Practicing mindfulness reduces anxiety and brings a sense of calm.

SENSORY & OBSERVATION GAMES

These activities focus on engaging all the senses to help your child be fully present in the moment and tune into the natural environment.

How to Play

Mindfulness Prompt

The Listening Walk: Go for a short walk and be as quiet as possible. Stop and point to a nature sound.

"What is the quietest sound you can hear right now? Can you hear the wind talking to the leaves?"

Texture Detectives: Gently touch different natural items like smooth river stones, bumpy tree bark, the softness of sagebrush leaves, and rough sandstone. Try going barefoot on the grass!

"How does the bark feel against your hand? Is the sandstone rough or smooth? Is the grass cool or warm under your feet?"

Mindful Viewing: Choose a single, small object—a flower, a ladybug, a seed. Look at it closely for 30 - 60 seconds. Repeat with clouds, noting their shapes.

"How many colors can you see on that tiny flower? What shape is that cloud—is it a dog or a big pillow?"

Nature Scavenger Breath: Stand still and slowly sniff the air. Try inhaling through the nose and then gently through the mouth to "taste the air."

"Take a long, slow breath. What smells can you find? Does the air have a taste today? (e.g., wet dirt, pine needles, desert sage, or fresh rain)"





BREATHING AND MOVING GAMES

These activities teach children simple ways to calm their bodies using breath and gentle motion, inspired by the surrounding nature.

How to Play

Growing Flower Breath: Have your child start in a small crouch (a "seed"). As they breathe in slowly, have them gradually stand up, stretching their arms up and out to become a fully bloomed flower. Exhale slowly as they gently return to the seed shape.

Mindfulness Prompt

"Breathe in and slowly grow tall, tall, tall! Feel the sun warm your flower petals. Now breathe out and gently curl back down to sleep."

Swaying with the Wind: On a breezy day, have your child stand tall and sway slowly like a tree or flutter like tall grass, letting the wind gently move their body.

"Feel the wind push on your clothes. Let the wind move you! Can you sway your arms slowly and gently, just like a tall tree?"

"Mindful Feet": Do a simple body scan while walking, focusing on the sensation of their feet connecting with the ground. Walk barefoot where it is safe and appropriate (like on grass or sand).

"Wiggle your toes. Do you feel the ground pushing back? Walk slowly and feel your heel touch first, then your toes. How does the earth feel on your bare skin?"

CREATIVE PLAY & CULTIVATING AWE

These activities encourage creativity, focus, and a feeling of wonder and gratitude for the natural world.

How to Play

Pebble Stack Focus: Find a few flat pebbles or small, smooth stones. Carefully try to stack them one on top of the other, focusing entirely on the slow, deliberate action of balancing the next piece.

Mindfulness Prompt

"Slow, slow, slow. Watch where you put the next stone. Be quiet and still so the tower doesn't wobble!"

Awe and Wonder: Find moments of big natural beauty to share: watching a colorful sunset, standing near a waterfall, or looking at a full moon rise.

"Wow! Look how many colors the sky is changing to! Isn't that amazing? How does that make your heart feel?"

Make a Tree Friend: Encourage your child to choose one special tree to be their "friend." They can name it and give it a hug. Visit this tree often to notice how it changes through the seasons.

"This is your special tree friend! What color is its coat today? Let's hug it and see how big it is!"

Pooh Sticks Game: Find a small bridge over a creek or river. Drop natural items (sticks, maple pods, leaves) into the water on one side and race to see which one flows out first on the other side.

"Ready, set, drop! Which stick will win the race under the bridge?"

Gratitude Practice: Sit quietly outside. Talk about what they are thankful for in nature (the sun, a favorite tree, a bird's song).

"What is one thing in nature that you are happy is here today? Tell me why."





SHARE NATURE WITH A FRIEND CHALLENGE | *everything is better with a friend*

FOR THIS ADVENTURE, INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN YOU OUTDOORS

This challenge is designed to help your preschooler discover the joy of nature through child-led, collaborative play. When children explore together, their curiosity and bravery are contagious, making them slow down, observe more closely, and build essential social skills.

WHY EXPLORE WITH A BUDDY?

Exploring nature with a friend or sibling is not just fun—it's vital for healthy development!

Bravery is Contagious – Peers encourage each other to try new things, such as picking up a "roly poly bug" or climbing a low log, which boosts confidence and self-efficacy.

Shared Discovery – Children use rich, descriptive language when talking to a friend about a discovery, which enhances communication and vocabulary skills.

Physical Strength – Working together to move a heavy object or balance on a log develops teamwork and strengthens gross motor skills.

FOR THE GROWN-UPS: ENCOURAGE SELF-DIRECTED PLAY

These activities are suggestions. Please allow your child to lead the exploration! The most important thing is that the friends feel safe enough for true, self-directed play.

Your Role: Be present, but step back. Allow the children to work out their own simple problems (like sharing a tool or choosing a direction). This is how they build competence.

What to Bring (for two children):

- A natural space where safe, child-led exploration is allowed (like a backyard, park, or unmanaged trail).
- One shared tool, like a magnifying glass or a bucket (to encourage turn-taking).
- Your eyes, ears, hands, and heart!

Grown-Up's Role (The Safe Observer)

- **Step Back and Resist Directing:** Allow the children to work out simple obstacles (like who leads or how to move a stick). This builds joint problem-solving.
- **Encourage Descriptive Talk:** Prompt them to describe what their friend found. ("How would you describe your friend's crunchy-brown leaf?") This expands their **language skills**.
- **Allow Safe Risk:** Let them try to climb, lift, or balance. This safe, self-directed risk-taking is essential for building **self-efficacy** (bravery).





THE TEXTURE DETECTIVES

What To Do

Go outside and find objects with interesting textures, like **dry pine needles, bumpy pinecones, or gritty desert stones.**

Have the friends take turns being the "Blindfolded Feelers" (with a light scarf or using closed eyes). The partner gently guides their friend's hand to touch an object. After touching, the children describe the texture to each other using their hands (bumpy, smooth, rough, crunchy).

Learning Goal

Helps friends **work together** and provides a healthy way to **focus** and feel **calm** by exploring textures with their hands. Enhances descriptive language.

Builds bravery and strong muscles! Helps children **work as a team** to solve a problem (like moving a heavy branch or finding a way around a puddle).

THE BALANCE BUDDIES

What To Do

Find a safe, low log or a line on the ground to walk across. If no line exists, use a stick to draw one in the dirt.

The friends should help each other walk the "line" or the log. One friend can hold the other's hand for balance, or they can cheer each other on.

Challenge them to work together to lift and move a reasonably heavy object, like a big, fallen branch or a pile of small stones.

Learning Goal

Builds **bravery and strong muscles!** Helps children **work as a team** to solve a problem (like moving a heavy branch or finding a way around a puddle).

Increases focus and listening skills by asking them to be quiet and still. Helps them use art to show what sound or quiet feels like.

Promotes **creativity and wonder** by revealing hidden textures. Helps children **think like a scientist** about why things feel different.

THE COZY CRITTER HOME

What To Do

Find a safe, low log or a line on the ground to walk across. If no line exists, use a stick to draw one in the dirt.

The friends should help each other walk the "line" or the log. One friend can hold the other's hand for balance, or they can cheer each other on.

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Promotes **creativity and wonder** by revealing hidden textures. Helps children **think like a scientist** about why things feel different.





UTAH FOREVER CHALLENGE | *Ensuring Utah's outdoors for years to come*

DO YOU PART TO BE A STEWARD OF UTAH'S LAND, ANIMALS, AND PEOPLE.

It's never too young to start taking care of the places we play and explore. Teaching 3 to 5-year-olds to be stewards can help instill habits of kindness and appreciation for the natural world.

WHAT IS UTAH FOREVER?

"Utah Forever" is a promise to protect Utah's beautiful lands, lakes, parks, and special ancient places, so they remain healthy and clean, now and for every child who will live here in the future. Stewardship is caring for the natural environment we call home.

Why Practice Stewardship? Learning to care for nature builds essential life skills!

- **Responsibility:** Caring for a plant or building a home for a bird teaches accountability and patience.
- **Teamwork with Nature:** Children learn that humans can be valuable partners with the environment, not just visitors.
- **Kindness and Empathy:** Taking action to help an animal or clean up a park builds a strong sense of empathy for the natural world.

SAFETY FIRST

Stewardship requires careful planning. Please follow these rules at all times:

- **Trusted Adult Help:** All building and construction activities (like using a hammer, nails, or tools) must be done by a trusted adult. Children can help with planning and decorating!
- **Wear Gloves:** When picking up litter, always have your child wear gloves to keep their hands safe and clean.
- **Know Your Plants:** Be sure your child knows what poison ivy or poisonous plants look like before touching plants.
- **Protect Special Things:** Never touch or climb on ancient things like old rock art or historic buildings. Look with your eyes, not your hands!

NATURE'S LITTLE GARDENER

What To Do

Help water a young tree or a struggling plant in your yard or a local park. Gently remove weeds that are growing right next to the plant you want to help. Observe the plant closely after you water it. Does it look happier?

Learning Goal

Practicing kindness and care toward living things. Using small tools (like a little shovel or watering can) helps develop fine motor skills.





BUILD A CREATURE HOME

What To Do

Work with a trusted adult to build a new home for local wildlife! This could be a bird feeder (placed far from predators), a simple bug hotel (made by stacking sticks and leaves in a small container), a Mason Bee house*, or a bat box. Have your child help paint the project, fill the feeder, or find the perfect spot for the bug hotel. (*Mason bees are non-stinging, essential pollinators, and the construction process is simple enough for the child to participate in safely: filling tubes, decorating the outer shell.)

Learning Goal

Learning how to help nature grow and survive in our yards and parks. It teaches responsibility through caring for a habitat.

EARTH HELPERS

What To Do

Visit a park, trail, or even your backyard and look for any trash or litter that doesn't belong. Give your child gloves and a safe container. Help them collect litter and safely put it in the correct trash bin.

Shoreline version: At a waterside park, creek bank, or beach: Look for any trash or litter that is near the water or could wash into it.

Learning Goal

Understanding that we are part of **nature's team** and need to keep our shared spaces clean. It builds **empathy** for the environment.

Shoreline cleanup connections: Understanding that trash hurts the water and the animals that live in it. This activity builds **empathy** and **water protection awareness**.

THE COMPOST CREW

What To Do

Help your trusted adult add "brown" (dry leaves, sticks) and "green" (fruit/veggie scraps) materials to a compost pile or bin.

Use a small stick or shovel to turn the compost pile over. Look for worms—they are the Compost Crew's best helpers!

Learning Goal

Learning that **waste can become treasure!** It teaches a core lesson in **environmental recycling** and helps children **think like scientists** about what earth needs to grow.

LITERACY CONNECTION

Trusted Adults: Enhance stewardship and ecological care concepts with a picture book from your library!

You can start with these titles and get more recommendations from your librarian:

- [The Lorax](#) by Dr. Seuss
- [We Are Water Protectors](#) by Carol Lindstrom
- [The Curious Garden](#) by Peter Brown
- [Compost Stew An A-to-Z Recipe for the Earth](#) by Mary McKenna Siddals

