



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.





NATURE JOURNALING CHALLENGE

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FOR THIS ADVENTURE, COMPLETE AT LEAST FOUR NATURE-INSPIRED JOURNAL ENTRIES.

Nature journaling builds mindfulness, observation, and detail-oriented skills. It's also really fun! Create your own nature journal to record all of the wonderful things you experience while completing the Adventure Challenge.

How to Draw - [John Muir Laws](#) has a vast library of videos to help you learn to draw. YouTube can also be a helpful resource.

Relief Rubbings - Place your paper against the bark of a tree or over a leaf. Use the side of a crayon or your pencil lead to rub over the item and capture every ridge. This [website](#) has some ideas.

Flower or plant pressing - You can preserve plants and flowers you find by pressing them. This [site](#) walks you through making a flower press with cardboard. Then, tape your pressed items into your Nature Journal. Make sure you are collecting specimens in approved areas.

Change it up! - Use a variety of art supplies to enrich your experience. Crayons, markers, pastels, stamps, and watercolors make creating fun and add variety to your journal.

Try a Prompt - Using prompts can help get a journal entry started. Here is an example from [John Muir Laws](#): "I notice. . .", "I wonder. . .", and "It reminds me of...".

Use an App or Field Guide - Apps like [iNaturalist](#) and local Field Guides can help you identify the plants and animals you see.

Time-lapse - Record the same plant over all four seasons. Note any changes you see in the plant and its surroundings. Or, visit the same spot at different times of the day.

Assemble a Nature Journaling Bag - Put all of your supplies together in one, grab-and-go place. Be sure to include your art supplies, a clip-board or easel, a magnifying glass, binoculars, and any other items that enrich your experience.

Photography - Take your camera outside and capture what you see. Print your pictures and record your notes in your nature journal.

Engage Your Senses - Find a spot to sit. Notice what you see, taste, touch, smell, and hear. Record your observations in your journal.

TAKE IT UP A NOTCH!

Create Your Own Field Guide - Field guides tell readers about a specific area or topic. Pick your favorite trail, animal, or plant, and create your own field guide.





JOURNALING PROMPTS

Tree Silhouettes - On a clear winter day, observe the shapes of bare trees against the sky. Sketch the silhouettes of the branches and trunks, noting how different tree types have unique shapes even in winter.

Pine, Fir, and Spruce Cones - Record the various types of cones you find from pine, fir, and spruce trees. How do their shapes, sizes, and textures differ? Collect examples and sketch or describe them in detail.

Frost-Bitten Leaves - Photograph or sketch the delicate patterns and colors found on frost-bitten leaves. How do the frost and cold temperatures affect their appearance? Pay attention to the colors and textures.

Twig Study - Study and sketch twigs from various trees. In the latter part of winter, note the date and outside temperature when you first see a tree's buds begin to swell in anticipation of spring.

Snowflake Study - If it's snowing, try to catch snowflakes on a dark surface or paper before they melt

Plant Growth Over Time - Choose a plant or tree to observe over a week or two. Draw it every few days and record how it changes. Does it grow taller? Do new leaves or flowers appear? Write about how the plant is responding to spring's warmth and sunlight.

The Sounds of Spring - Sit quietly outside and listen for the sounds of spring: birds chirping, raindrops pattering, the wind rustling through trees, or insects buzzing. Describe these sounds in your journal. Can you describe what's happening in the environment based on the sounds?

Nature Color Palette - Enjoy recording the bright colors of spring. Take a walk and find as many shades of green, pink, purple, yellow, etc., as possible. Sketch different plants or areas and match the colors as best as possible with colored pencils or crayons. How many different shades of that color can you find? What do they tell you about the plants growing in spring?

Autumn Wind - Pay attention to the wind. How does it feel in the fall compared to the warmer months? How does the wind affect the trees, plants, and animals? Can you hear any sounds in the wind, like rustling leaves or branches?

Foggy Morning - If you get up early and there's fog, observe how it looks in the morning light. How does the fog make everything look different? How does it feel to walk through fog? Write or draw your experience.

Describe a Desert Sunset - What colors do you see in the sky? How does the temperature change as the sun sets? What animals or insects do you hear?

Sketch a Wildflower - Find a flower in the wild and draw it. Write down its colors, size, and where you found it. Can you name it? What insects might visit it?

ANIMALS EMERGING FROM HIBERNATION

In Utah, many animals come out of hibernation in the spring. Keep an eye out for these and other critters and record them in your nature journal! Follow [these guidelines](#) about staying safe amongst some of Utah's more dangerous wildlife.

-Black bears, lizards, frogs and toads, ground squirrels, woodchucks, snakes, bats, Uinta chipmunks

BIRDS RETURNING TO UTAH

Much like the above, many birds migrate back to Utah as the weather gets warmer and food like insects, seeds, and flowers become easier to find. Record them in your journal as well!

-Swallows, warblers, robins, shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, hummingbirds, mourning doves, cuckoos, and road runners

