



**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.

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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.

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**FOR THIS ADVENTURE, INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN YOU OUTDOORS**

Just about everything is better with a friend. Bringing a friend can help others try something new and take your adventures outdoors to a whole new level. Or maybe your friend is there to teach you! Either way, you both have a blast.

**Donate Gently Used Outdoor Gear** - Donating your items can make enjoying the outdoors more accessible for others. Items like winter coats and boots make a difference in enjoying time outside.

**Unstructured Outdoor Play** - The outdoors give rise to natural curiosity, creativity, and play. Gather a friend or two and play outside. Discover where you are, develop new games, and build your friendships.

**Snow Sculptures** - Get creative with snow and other natural materials as you sculpt snow into fantastic shapes.

**Introduce a Friend to Something New** - Sometimes, trying something new, like camping, can be challenging. Invite a friend to join you in one of your favorite outdoor activities. Help them prepare by making a list of the supplies they will need, like water, sunscreen, and good shoes.

**Join a Group** - Organizations like 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and YMCA offer fun opportunities to get outside and make new friends.

**Volunteer** - Places like Tracy Aviary offer volunteer opportunities. Grab a friend and help community organizations continue to offer powerful outdoor experiences.

**Community Gardens** - Many communities have common garden areas. This is a wonderful opportunity to gather with your neighborhood friends and grow delicious food.

**Local Food and Traditions** - Fall is a season of harvest and celebration. In Utah, many fruits, vegetables, and other foods are gathered during autumn. Explore what is in season near you: What local foods are available during this time? How do people in your community celebrate the harvest? You might learn about events like Melon Days in Green River, Peach Days in Brigham City, or the Fall Harvest Festival in Wellsville.

In some communities, traditions like pine nut harvesting are an important part of the season, especially for members of the Paiute and Goshute tribes. Is there a particular food or tradition that helps you connect to the season?

**Join a 4H Club** - H stands for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health and is over 100 years old! Joining 4H is only \$10 a year, and members gain confidence and learn about leadership while exploring agricultural activities, indoor gardening, food preparation, and recreation (and many other activities)

**TAKE IT UP A NOTCH!**

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**Organize a Gear Drive** - Help others get outside by organizing or volunteering at an outdoor recreation gear donation drive.





**Rock Climbing** - Sport climbing is an activity that requires two people to participate together. One person will be climbing while the other belays. As a belayer, make sure that you are aware of the needs of your climber and provide the proper tightness in the rope as they climb the wall. Safety: Outdoor rock climbing demands a solid understanding of technical equipment. The best way to learn is with a qualified guide. For a top-notch educational and safe experience, choose a guide certified by the American Mountain Guide Association.

**Outdoor Yoga** - Find a quiet place outdoors with plenty of room to move around. Take a few deep breaths then practice linking movement with breath. Or Sign up for an outdoor class with a local yoga studio or recreation center. Tip: Youth ages 0-18 can sign up for a free My County Rec Pass, which gives access to 18 Salt Lake County parks and recreation amenities, including yoga classes.

**Junior Ranger Programs** - Junior Ranger Programs - Many of Utah's National and State parks have Junior Ranger programs that include activities like tracking animal prints, bird watching and learning about habitats. Utah has 5 national parks and 46 state parks, so there's probably one not too far from where you live! Help a fourth-grade friend sign up for a free national Parks Pass and join the Junior Ranger Program together.

**Utah Wild Places** - Explore the Utah's Wild Places, choose your own adventure ideas. Decide on a new location to visit and bring a friend along with you! Or bring a friend to your favorite wild place.

**Watershed Education** - In Salt Lake County our drinking water comes directly from melted snow that flows down the mountain in streams and rivers. Little Cottonwood Canyon, Big Cottonwood Canyon, and Bells Canyon are protected watershed areas. We can help ensure clean drinking water by following watershed regulations - no swimming (that includes wading and splashing), no dogs or animals in watershed areas, and no camping within 200 feet of watershed lakes and rivers. This is a perfect opportunity to view activity and life around flowing water and lakes without getting wet. Tell a friend or trail user about why it's important to protect the watershed and lead by example.

**Group Water Relay** - Have fun with a water relay! Organize a race where you paddle, row, or sail through different checkpoints. This team challenge is excellent for practicing your skills and having fun with friends or family.

**Autumn Harvest Crafting** - Use natural materials like fallen leaves, acorns, pinecones, and even colorful autumn flowers to create your own autumn-inspired crafts. You can make leaf rubbings, create a fall wreath, or make a nature-themed greeting card using your findings. While crafting, take some time to reflect on how the changing season influences your creativity. What colors, textures, and patterns do you see around you? How do these natural materials spark new ideas for your projects?

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**Attend an EKO Event** - Our many community partners throughout the state will be hosting EKO-themed events. Find one near you on our community calendar and bring your friends!

**Share the EKO Adventure Challenge!** - Tell your friends, siblings, parents, grandparents, teachers, summer camp counselors and others about the EKO Adventure Challenge! The more people we have outside together, the better!

