



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





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Utahns are fortunate to have access to a variety of state and national parks, as well as other Wilderness spaces. In fact, Utah is comprised of roughly 70% public land. There is something for everyone in Utah's wild places.

Dark Skies - Utah has the highest concentration of dark skies in the world. State and National parks often host night sky events. You can get your Starry Skies badge at the same time!

Preserve Ancient Sites - Utah wilderness spaces are also home to numerous ancient Native American sites. As you visit them, think about the people who built them. Some are sacred sites and should be approached with additional care and respect.

Leave No Trace - Leave no trace principles are important to follow wherever we are, but especially important in Utah's wild places. Visit the website and help your family prepare a pack to take with you.

Utah National Parks - Utah is home to the Big 5 National Parks: Zion, Bryce, Arches, Canyonlands, and Capitol Reef. We also have [nine national monuments](#) and several landmarks. Visit a National Park, monument, or landmark that you haven't visited before.

Utah State Parks - There are 46 [state parks](#) in Utah, located throughout the state. Many state parks have Jr. Ranger programs that help you get to know the park and its inhabitants. Find your local state park and plan a visit.

Utah Wilderness Areas - The Bureau of Land Management, Utah, oversees [35 wilderness](#) areas and 77 Wilderness Study Areas. A Wilderness (note the capital W) is an area designated under the [National Wilderness Preservation System](#). Learn more about the qualities of these special places and the [approved activities](#) we can engage in there.

Leave What You Find - It is absolutely ok to admire and take pictures of the items you find. However, it is important to protect the area by leaving all items, natural and historical, where you found them. Natural objects are protected by law on public lands. Cultural artifacts are also protected. Cultural artifacts include any item over 50 years old, and may be items like old jars or cans, or items from indigenous people. These artifacts should be left where they are. In addition, natural materials, like antlers, flowers, and rocks, are vital to ecosystem health. Removing these items may impact wildlife health. Instead, write about or draw what you find in your nature journal.

Who Came Before - Get to know the tribes who lived or currently live in the area you are visiting. The Native Land Digital site is a great place to start. As you visit wild places, write or draw pictures about how ancient people lived in the area.

The San Rafael Swell - Commonly referred to as 'The Swell', this area of Utah is home to places worthy to visit. Goblin Valley State Park, The Wedge Overlook and the Jurassic National Monument are just a few of the incredible sites you'll be able to see here. Along with fossils, petroglyphs and pictographs can be found all through The Swell, so be sure to look up at the canyon walls as you explore!

Jordan River Parkway - Located in the heart of many of our cities in northern Utah, the Jordan River is a truly wild place right in the middle of a neighborhood. The Jordan river flows south to north, bringing water into the Great Salt Lake from Utah Lake. Known as Pia Okwai or 'big flow' in Shoshoni, the Jordan is a vital habitat for species like cranes, deer, trout and catfish!





Bonneville Salt Flats - The Bonneville Salt Flats are located west of the Great Salt Lake and stretch for 30,000 acres. The unique, flat and vast landscape make this a beautiful spot to practice nature photography.

Little Sahara Recreation Area - Located in Juab County, this recreation area, which sits on Bureau of Land Management property, is 60,000 acres big and is a popular location for OHV users. Sand Mountain, Black Mountain and White Sand Dune bowls are popular features of these free moving sand dunes. Camping is also a popular activity in Little Sahara.

TAKE IT UP A NOTCH!

Wilderness Camping and Backpacking- Take your wilderness skills to the wilderness. Be sure to camp in approved areas and apply your Leave No Trace training.

Build Your Own Structure- Learn more about the varieties of ways to build your own structure, like a lean-to, debris hut, or tarp shelter.

