




IDEAS ARE ALL AROUND ACTIVITY KIT

Includes more than fifty creative activities for ages four through eight!



IDEAS ARE ALL AROUND • Philip C. Stead • Ages 4-8 • HC 9781626721814 • ideasareallaround.com

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IDEAS ARE ALL AROUND

by Philip C. Stead

STORY-TIME ACTIVITY KIT


As an author and his dog Wednesday walk through their neighborhood, they look at sunflowers, say hi to Frank the turtle, who makes quick for the water and disappears, and watch a train rumble by as they head uphill to a big purple house that belongs to their friend Barbara. Wednesday chases squirrels while the two friends discuss fishing and war and how back before the neighborhood, enormous woolly mammoths roamed where houses now sit.

Thoughts open up to other thoughts, and ideas are born and carried forward, often transforming into other ideas until the author finds that ideas really are all around; you just have to know what to do with them.

NOTE TO PARENTS, TEACHERS, BOOKSELLERS AND LIBRARIANS:

Ideas Are All Around is a book is meant to inspire creativity and fun! Please use these activities as an extension to reading the book to inspire finding more ideas all around in your home, outside your door, in your school or on a walk to anywhere your feet take you.

Children are masters at finding wonders in the world around them. This list of more than fifty activities is chock-full of fun things to inspire a variety of ages. Some suggest a walk in the neighborhood while others may be done with simple materials that can be found at home, at school, or even at local bookstores or libraries.

For very young children, look for the  symbol

BELOW ARE MORE THAN FIFTY ACTIVITIES INSPIRED BY THE BOOK

- Story and poem writing
- Leaf Rubbings
- Nature Walks
- Gardening
- Drawings
- Plays
- Collages
- Mixed Media (Art with found items)
- Paintings
- Quiet Time
- And Much More

LOOK FOR OBJECTS AND THEMES FOUND IN *IDEAS ARE ALL AROUND* THAT WILL INSPIRE DISCUSSION WHEN YOU POINT THEM OUT TO CHILDREN AS THEY DO THE ACTIVITIES AND LINK THEM TO WHAT THEY HAVE READ

- Colors
- Flowers, Sunflowers
- Rain, Snow
- Sidewalks, Roads, Pathways
- Communities
- Dogs, Cats, Fish, Horses, Ducks, Squirrels, Turtles
- Neighborhood, Sights, Friends
- Clouds, Stars, Sky
- Trees, Grass, Dirt
- Sunshine
- Signs
- Houses, Buildings, Schools, Stores
- Water



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ANIMALS & PETS

Do you have a pet or a class pet? Do you have a favorite animal?

1. Draw or Paint a Picture of That Animal Having Fun Outside

Try your hand at drawing with a variety of art items such as crayons, colored pencils, lead pencils, watercolor paint, or finger paints.

2. Write a Poem About Your Favorite Animal

What does that animal do that you find so captivating? Include how you feel in your poem. Read it to someone special to you.

3. Build a Bird Feeder

Materials: pinecone, peanut butter, birdseed, wire, string, or yarn

Directions

- Roll a pinecone in a dish of peanut butter.
- Roll the peanut-butter covered pinecone in the seeds.
- Make a loop in the wire or string or yarn, tie it to the pinecone, then hang it on a tree limb, bush, fire escape, or someplace where you can watch from your window and see the birds eat.

4. Go Bird-Watching

Anywhere you go there will be birds. Look in your bird book to find out what kind of birds you can expect to see in your area. Birds owe their success as a species to their ability to fly. Flight enables birds to feed where other animals cannot, to escape enemies, and to migrate with the seasons. Birds in flight are a beautiful sight. Using your binoculars, look for birds in flight, feeding, and at rest.

Materials: binoculars, bird book for your area (which can be purchased from a local bookstore or borrowed from the school library or public library)

Directions

- Try to spot different types of birds.
- Notice how beaks are shaped to cope with different food sources—long or hooked for tearing at prey, short and stout cone shapes to crack seeds.
- Feet are formed for specific purposes too, like perching on twigs, running, clinging to trees, grasping prey, or paddling in water.
- Birds have feathers of different colors either to blend in with the environment or to stand out.

5. Make a Tree Bird Feeder

Materials: berries, seeds, raisins, apples, popped popcorn, string, fabric strips, needle, thread

Directions

- Find a tree about your height in your yard (Christmas-type trees work well).
- String the popcorn, berries, seeds, raisins, and apple pieces on a thread. This is done by threading a needle with a two-foot long thread, tying a knot at the end, then putting the needle through the items one at a time.
- The two foot-long threads can be tied together once they have food on them.
- Loop the food thread around the branches of the tree.
- Many birds will be attracted to your feeder tree.
- In springtime, hang colored string, fabric pieces, and yarn on the tree and watch the birds snatch them up to build nests. You may even be able to walk around the neighborhood and spot your thread in nests!
- Other things to hang on your tree include a pinecone smeared with peanut butter, half an orange, or a string of unshelled peanuts.



6. Build Your Own Bird's Nest

Materials: heavy-duty poster board, mud, leaves, grass, sticks, twigs, pine needles

Directions

- If you have the chance, show your child a real-life bird's nest. Talk about what he would use to build a nest if he were a bird. When this nest is complete, he might want to put a toy bird or eggs in it.
- Let your child make a mixture of the mud and the leaves and grass.
- Help him form the mixture into a nest shape.
- Let him add the sticks, twigs, and pine needles for interest.

7. Make a Milk-Carton Bird Feeder

Materials: quart-size milk carton, half-gallon-size milk carton, scissors, glue gun, enamel paint, X-Acto knife, 20-inch piece of heavy cord, birdseed

Directions

- Wash out the milk cartons with soapy water and allow them to dry. Cut the top and bottom off of the quart-size carton, forming a rectangular tube that is about six inches tall. Cut a hole the size of a half a quarter in each side of the bottom of the tube. Discard the top and bottom of this carton. Cut the top and bottom off of the half-gallon-size carton to make a sloped roof for the tube and a rectangular piece for the base. Discard the middle of this carton.
- With an adult's help, using the glue gun, glue the spout of the top (where the milk comes out) together. Spray all three pieces with enamel paint and allow them to dry.
- With an adult's help, use an X-Acto knife to make a hole in the center of the top of the bird feeder and the center of the bottom of the bird feeder. Thread the heavy cord down through the hole in the roof, through the tube, and through the hole in the bottom. Make a knot in the cord underneath the bird feeder. Make another large knot in the cord about three inches above the roof. Form the top end of the cord into a loop for hanging the bird feeder.
- You can fill the feeder from the top by lifting the roof off and pouring seed into the tube. If you want to attract more exotic birds like cardinals and blue jays, try using sunflower birdseed. Keep in mind, however, that these birds are much more aggressive than other birds and may scare smaller birds away.

Plants and Seeds

8. Grow Pumpkins!

Pumpkins need about four months to grow, so plant the seeds three to four weeks after the last spring frost.

Materials: soil and compost, pumpkin seeds, compost tea, leaves or grass clippings, newspapers or straw for mulch

Directions

- Choose a sunny area for your pumpkin patch. Help your child use soil and compost to make a hill. If you have a large garden, make three or four hills spaced about three feet apart.
- Plant three or four pumpkin seeds in each hill.
- Water the hills each week and watch for seedlings to appear. When they do, pull out the weaker-looking ones to leave one strong seedling growing in each hill.
- When blossoms appear, remove all but three from each plant. Each blossom will become a pumpkin.
- Water when the soil dries out and water with compost tea every few weeks.
- Spread compost, leaves, or grass clippings on top of the soil around the plants. Make sure the grass clippings don't touch the stems of your plants.
- To ensure that the pumpkins don't rot on the moist soil, place newspapers or straw mulch under the pumpkins as they grow. Turn them frequently so they ripen on all sides.

9. Make a Dry-Leaf Collage

Materials: construction paper, scissors, dry leaves, glue stick

Directions

- Cut one or two leaf shapes out of construction paper.



- Crinkle up dry leaves until they're in fairly small pieces (this may be your toddler's favorite part).
- Spread glue on one side of the construction-paper leaf and sprinkle with dry leaf pieces.
- If you like, punch a hole in the construction paper and hang to display.

10. Grow Indoor Seedlings

Seedlings should be started indoors about one month before planting them outside.

Materials: egg carton cups or small planting pots, potting soil, seeds, pen, tray, spray bottle of water, plastic wrap

Directions

- Fill egg carton cups or planting pots with potting soil.
- Plant the seeds according to the instructions on the seed packets, then label each cup with the name of the plant in it.
- Put the cups on a tray and spray them with water until the soil is damp.
- Cover the tray with plastic wrap and place it on top of your refrigerator. Don't put the tray in a sunny spot.
- Every day, remove the plastic wrap for an hour. Water the plants when the surface of the soil looks dry.
- When green sprouts appear, remove the plastic wrap and place the tray in a sunny spot.
- When the plants are four inches tall, you can transplant them.
- Help the plants adjust by putting the seedlings outside for a few hours each day before transplanting them. After a week, they'll be ready for planting in your garden.

11. Prepare Potpourri Pinecones

Spend a fall afternoon outside getting fresh air and plenty of pinecones for this project!

Materials: pinecones, water, glue, cinnamon or cloves or other spices, paintbrush, mixing bowl and spoon, a plastic bowl for each spice, small basket or decorative bowl

Directions

- Take a walk with your child to collect an assortment of pinecones.
- Lay newspapers over the entire work area.
- Mix half a cup of glue and half a cup of water in the mixing bowl.
- Put each spice into a separate plastic bowl.
- Using the paintbrush, coat an entire pinecone with a layer of the glue mixture.
- Roll the pinecone in one, two, or three different spices. Make sure to cover the entire pinecone. Repeat for each potpourri pinecone you want to make.
- Set the pinecones aside to dry for several hours.
- Display your pinecones in a small basket or decorative bowl, and they'll keep your house smelling sweet!

12. Grow Giant Sunflowers

Materials: sunflower seeds, compost tea, compost, stakes

Directions

- Have your child plant sunflower seeds early in the growing season, after all danger of frost has passed, about one inch deep and three feet apart.
- If you're planting sunflowers in a garden, plant them where they won't shade shorter plants.
- Water the plants regularly and every three weeks water with compost tea.
- When seedlings appear, put compost around the base of each plant, making sure the compost doesn't touch the stem.
- Taller plants may need stakes for support.

13. Grow a Plant from a Seed

Your preschooler or youngster will be fascinated to see how plants grow from seeds or cuttings.

Materials: seeds, shallow dish of water, planters, potting soil

Directions

- In a shallow dish, soak seeds from an orange, apple, grapefruit, lemon, or lime in water for a day or two.



- Fill several planters with potting soil and place three or four seeds in each one about half an inch deep.
- Water the seeds, place the pots in a sunny spot, and wait for the green shoots to appear.
- You can try planting seeds in a pattern or shape such as a letter, number, square, or circle.

14. Make a Twisty Twig Vase

On your next nature walk or trip to the park, take time to collect some twigs for this activity. In an afternoon your kids can turn an old empty jar into a beautiful vase!

Materials: twigs, rubber bands, empty jar, twine or ribbon, glue

Directions

- While on a nature hike or playing in the backyard, gather a bunch of long, straight twigs.
- Break the twigs so that they are an inch longer than the height of the jar.
- Wrap a rubber band around the neck of jar about an inch from the top. Wrap another rubber band around the jar an inch from the bottom.
- Place the twigs around the jar, tucking the ends under both rubber bands. Space them as closely as possible.
- When the jar is covered with twigs, slide the rubber bands toward each other, so that they meet in the middle of the jar.
- Take a few pieces of twine or ribbon and wrap them around the jar to cover the rubber bands.
- To finish the vase, either make a bow with the ribbon or simply glue the ends in place.

15. Framed Fall Foliage

This is a good activity for taking a walk and talking as you collect some seasonal leaves.

Materials: leaves, waxed paper, towel, iron, cologne or essential oil

Directions

- Arrange the leaves attractively on a piece of waxed paper. Cover with another piece of waxed paper to form a sandwich.
- With the help of an adult, fold a towel around the sandwich and move it to an ironing board.
- Iron the towel on medium heat until the waxed paper underneath has fused around the leaves.
- Frame and give as gifts. Spray with a little cologne or essential oil before fusing to add a delightful scent.

16. Create Art Inspired by Colorful Flowers

Materials: plants and flowers, crayons, paper

Directions

- Go on a walk with your child and bring home a variety of plants and flowers, such as grass, leaves, dandelions, and so on.
- Spread them out on a table in your backyard.
- Encourage her to draw a picture using only crayons in colors that match the items you have collected.

17. Build a Terrarium

A terrarium is a completely self-supporting ecosystem. The plant life replenishes the air with oxygen, light shining through provides the light and power source, and water comes from the moisture in the soil. As the dead leaves fall off, they decompose providing food for the soil.

Materials: clear glass container with a neck that is wide enough to reach through, small stones or gravel, activated charcoal (from the pet store), piece of screen or mesh or cheesecloth the size of the bottom of the container, small sponge, potting soil, small plants or moss from outside or the plant store, small figures (optional)

Directions

- Select plants that are small, like shade, and don't grow too fast or too tall.
- Put gravel on the bottom of the glass container.
- Sprinkle a small amount of activated charcoal on top of the gravel.
- With the help of an adult, cut a slit in the middle of the screen (or mesh or cheesecloth) and place it on top of the charcoal.



- Slice the sponge to 1/3 inch wide and stick it like a candle in between the slit in the screen and anchor it in the gravel. The sponge will bring moisture up to the plant roots.
- Cover the screen with potting soil.
- Gently make small holes for the plants, packing the soil loosely around them.
- Spray the plants with water and cover. Add small figures between the plants.
- The plants may look a little limp for a few days but will get used to their new environment in no time.

18. Grow a Sunflower House

Do you ever wish you had a place of your very own to hang out? A special spot where you can play with friends or just be by yourself? Why not plant a sunflower house! With a couple of packets of sunflower seeds, some water, and a sunny spot, you can grow your very own house. It's easy, but you must to be patient—growing a house takes time, you know!

Directions

- You'll need a packet of sunflower seeds; pick varieties that grow about six to eight feet tall. Good choices are Giant Sungold with big bushy flower heads, Autumn Beauty with yellow and burgundy bicolored blooms, Sun Samba with multicolored flowers, and the monster sunflower Sunzilla.
- Find a sunny spot and dig a circle, square, or rectangle in the dirt. Check first with your parents to make sure the location is okay. We grew a rectangle sunflower house that was sixteen by eight feet—about the size of compact car—and used a couple of packets of sunflower seeds.
- Plant the seeds an inch deep and about eight inches apart, leaving an opening for a door. Cover the seeds with dirt and give them a good drink of water. Watch for little seedlings to pop up in about a week. Keep watering and soon the seedlings will grow into the walls for your house.
- Remember to keep an eye on your growing house. Invite friends over for a picnic or decorate your house with plant markers, stepping stones, and even pots of little flowers.
- At the end of the summer, save the seeds from the sunflowers (if hungry birds don't get them first) and plant them next year for an even bigger and better house!

19. More Fun with Flowers

Materials: flower from a garden or found during a walk

Directions

- Go for a walk with your toddler and select a single beautiful flower to take to a friend or family member as a happy surprise.
- Extensions
- Pick a flower and give it to your toddler. Put it in the bathroom or bedroom in a vase where it can be seen and enjoyed.
 - Put flowers in your toddler's hair or attach them to your toddler's clothes with a piece of masking tape.

20. Pressing Flowers

One way to make the green seasons last is with flower crafts. Flower pressing is easy enough for anyone to do, and it offers possibilities that can challenge even the most skilled craftsperson. It is also a great way to train the eye, to get the family outdoors, and to encourage design sense and creativity.

In the nineteenth century, children and adults made formal albums of pressed wildflowers and plants in order to learn their characteristics and names. Small portable flower presses were constructed to take along on a hike, or plants were placed in a container called a vasculum and pressed at home. Others used flowers from the garden and even grew particular flowers especially suitable for pressing. Often when you buy a book at a used-book store, antique store, or flea market you may find some pressed blooms hidden between its pages. We can't help but wonder what ideas were buzzing around their heads when they pressed that flower in the book.

Materials: flowers, blotting paper, newspaper, books or cardboard with frames and straps, tweezers

Directions

- A heavy book with blotting paper on either side of the pressed flower works well. Another simple way to press flowers is to use newspaper and blotting paper layered between corrugated cardboard with the top and bottom secured by wooden frames tightened with straps.



- Place the flowers and plants so they don't overlap. Clamp down your press or close your book and add some more books on top. Check the flowers every few days to see if you need to replace the paper (it will be stained) and determine when they're completely dry and ready to use. Because they are fragile, avoid handling dried flowers too much. (You may want to sketch out your project in advance, so you only have to pick the flowers up once.) Use tweezers for positioning the flowers.
- Some flowers especially suitable for pressing are alyssum, bleeding heart, columbine, cosmos, daisies, forget-me-nots, geranium, hydrangea, lavender, marigold, pansies, petunias, and zinnias. Experiment and you'll find lots more. Ferns, leaves, vines, and grasses add interest to colorful blooms. Don't forget herbs, which are suitable both while they're flowering and after.

21. Pressed Flowers Framed As Nature Art

Materials: pressed flowers, watercolor paper, glue, hairspray, mat, frame, candles, paintbrush, paraffin, note cards, bookmarks, place cards, lampshades

Directions

- Gather your pressed flowers. Watercolor paper makes an especially nice background for framed flowers. Simply glue on flowers, mat, set with hairspray, and frame.
- You can add them to candles. Glue flowers onto a light-colored pillar candle, brush the entire surface with melted paraffin a little at a time (enough so that the flowers are covered yet visible), and let dry between coats.
- Pressed flowers can be used to decorate note cards, bookmarks, place cards, or lampshades, or made into ornaments—and much, much more.

22. Pressed-Flower Cards

Materials: pressed flowers, heavy paper, marker or pen, glue, tweezers, clean cloth

Directions

- Collect flowers from your yard, park, forest, roadside, or neighborhood. Make sure you only take a few and never take a flower if there is only one in the ground.
- Flowers that are small and delicate work best because they press flat. Some of the prettiest ones are wildflower weeds!
- Once you collect your flowers, press them (see instructions in activity 20 above).
- Design your card (you may want to make a few at a time).
- Look at poetry books to get ideas of what to write inside.
- When you are ready to glue the flowers to the card, put glue on the card where the flower will go.
- Use tweezers to take the flower out of the book and place it on the card. Then put a clean cloth over the top and carefully press the flower down.
- Continue adding flowers until you like the design.
- You can also glue pressed flowers to candles and glass vases, and then coat them with a clear acrylic.

23. Flower-Petal Stained Glass

To preserve the beautiful blooms of summer, take a stroll or hike together and collect flower petals for this activity.

Materials: flower petals, wooden popsicle sticks, crayon pieces, waxed paper, paper towels, paper clips, kitchen towel, iron

Directions

- Have your child choose an assortment of flower petals.
- Using a popsicle stick, she should scrape the crayon pieces over a paper towel to make a handful of shavings. Try to use different colors that complement the flower petals.
- Cut two foot-long pieces of waxed paper.
- Have her arrange the petals on one sheet of waxed paper however she wants and sprinkle the crayon shavings on the waxed paper in between the petals. Place the other piece of waxed paper on top of the petals and shavings. Secure the sheets together with paper clips.



- Spread a kitchen towel over the waxed paper. Set the iron on low heat and iron over the towel.
- Now your stained glass is ready to display in a window!

24. Adopt a Tree

Materials: tree, tape measure, paper, pencil or marker

Directions

- Find a tree that both you and your child think is special and adopt it.
- Explore it by touch. Measure its circumference.
- Research its variety and particular needs for optimal growth, and devote some regular time to caring for it.

Extensions

- Select a name for your tree and make a small name plaque to post at its foot.
- Start a seasonal diary to record your visits and observations of changes that occur.
- Make it a point to hug your tree each time you visit.
- Take pictures of your tree at various seasonal intervals.

Ideas Are All Around when you take a walk!

25. Nature Walk

Take a walk and write about it!

Materials: notebook, pen or pencil, bird book (optional)

Directions

- During a nature walk with your child or a group of children, try to notice as many different types of trees, bugs, and birds as you can.
- Keep a list of what you see.
- If you like, bring colored pencils and let your child draw the things he or she observes.
- If you can't identify a bug, tree, or bird, or if your child asks questions you can't answer, make a note of the item and his or her questions to look up on your next trip to the library.

26. Nature Prints

Spend some time collecting spring leaves and blossoms to make a piece of earth art!

Materials: leaves, flowers, feathers, fruit, and other natural materials; markers or a stamp pad; newspaper, construction paper

Directions

- Cover the area where you'll be working with newspaper in case of spills.
- Collect the natural materials that you'll use for your prints. Flat objects like leaves, cut pieces of fruit, or feathers will work best.
- Next, decide how you'll make your print. You can choose between markers, stamp pad, or paint. Follow the instructions below for the option you would like to use.
- To make a print with markers, color one side of your leaf (or other nature sample) completely. With even pressure, press the leaf colored-side down on the paper. Carefully lift the leaf off the paper and voilà—you have a print!
- To make a print with a stamp pad, lightly press one side of your nature sample on the pad. Be careful not to press too hard.

27. Make Nature Pocket Art!

Materials: collected leaves or feathers or other outdoor items, needle and thread, two yards of sheer fabric

Directions

- Make an unusual display of things the children have collected by sandwiching them between two layers of sheer fabric and sewing stitches to separate them from each other by making little pockets.
- When hung on the wall, the display provides ongoing opportunities for the children to talk about the items.



28. Create a Nature Mural After a Nature Walk

Materials: clean dry twigs of varying lengths, a roll of mural paper or unused wallpaper, scissors, acrylic paints, paintbrush, pine needles, tiny pinecones, little sticks and twigs, white glue, raffia or yarn

Directions

- Decide how large you want your mural to be. Roll out the paper lengthwise on a long table or the floor; be sure to lay it over newspaper in case of a spill.
- Take a walk in a nearby park or woods and begin collecting twigs of varying lengths, acorns, small pinecones, a handful of pine needles, and some small sticks.
- When you get home, clean and dry your twigs. Paint one side of a twig and lay it on the paper to leave a print; continue with remaining twigs. Stagger the prints into bunches, leaving space between each set.
- Glue the smaller twigs, pinecones, and needles lengthwise along the edges of the paper to give the mural a border.
- Braid or smooth out the raffia stings or yarn and knot at either end. Staple the string to the back at the top of the paper to use as a hanger.
- Hang the mural on a bulletin board or in your room, classroom, bookstore, or library.

29. Go on a Nature Hunt!

Materials: one paper bag per adult and child, one list of natural objects to collect per person

Directions

- Give each person a paper bag and a list of natural objects (a feather, a leaf, a smooth rock, a pinecone, a wildflower, and so on) to collect.
- You can give the same list to everyone or have each person look for a different group of objects.
- Challenge everyone to find all the objects on their list. Set a time limit of perhaps twenty minutes to find ten objects.
- A child may play this game alone or with others. For a group of children, pair up nonreaders with readers and then come together to show what you have found.

30. Family Scavenger Hunt

The idea of a scavenger hunt is to find all the items on a list and return them to a designated place as quickly as possible. There are many ways to organize a hunt and many choices to make. You can play as individuals or on teams either inside the house or outside.

Directions

- All items on the list are easily found in the backyard (and can be hidden before the party)—things like a red leaf, matchstick, old bottle or can, feather, etc.
- Each person or team is given a different list of items that they find by asking people around the neighborhood.
- You can have an alphabet hunt, where each person or team must find something for every letter of the alphabet.
- Or you can have an indoor hunt, where each person or team looks for things and checks them off their list when they find them without picking them up.
- Or hold a newspaper hunt, where each person is given a list of words, sentences, advertisements, or photographs that are to be cut out of or circled in a newspaper.

31. Shadow Tracing

Materials: chalk

Directions

- On a sunny day have your child stand still long enough to trace his shadow on the sidewalk or driveway. Have him change positions, then trace his shadow again. Make several tracings, then see if he can fit his shadow back inside the tracings.
- For a fun alternative, trace his shadow on a big sheet of newsprint or other paper. Let him outline his shadow with finger paint or color it with crayons or markers.



32. My Neighborhood Is Special!

Take a walk with your child and write down all of the things that you think make your neighborhood a special place.

33. Map Facts

Map skills can develop special concepts that help children understand distance and time. A good way to expose children to maps is to use one of the areas where you take a walk together, following along as you go and planning turns and routes.

Materials: map of your area (look for one online)

Directions

- Mark things on the map that are meaningful to either of you, such as where you live or go to school or where friends live. Find a favorite pizza parlor or grocery store
- Take a ride to a new place using the map and let your child direct you about turns.
- Graduate to a map of the state to plan an imaginary trip.

34. Adventure Walk

Why walk on the same old route when you can head out on an adventure designed by your child? Let your child give directions for the route and follow along agreeably.

Directions

- Help your child plan the next walk before heading out. Write down your child's directions to take along.
- Pick your next picnic spot by following your child's directions to take a certain number of steps and turns.
- Ask your child to direct your turns as you drive to familiar destinations.

35. Explore the Zoo

Materials: small tablet, pencil, admission to the zoo

Directions

- Take a trip to the zoo together.
- Before going, decide on categories to hunt for, such as scariest animal, cutest, laziest, etc.

Extensions

- Review the results with the whole family at dinner, discussing your differences of opinion.
- Count how many kinds of a certain animal there are, such as monkeys, elephants, or birds.

36. Sidewalk Drawing

Materials: white or colored chalk

Directions

- Have your child use chalk to draw on the sidewalk. Teach he or she how to play games, such as tic-tac-toe or hangman, or simply let he or she create masterpieces to her heart's content.
- The surface is always big enough for whatever project he or she undertakes, and you won't have to worry about display or storage space when he or she is done!
- Special sidewalk chalk is available, but regular chalk will do—just be sure to have lots, as it wears down pretty quickly.
- Make sure to limit your child's creativity to the sidewalk on your property, unless you ask the neighbors' permission first.

37. Nature Art All Around

Looking for an enjoyable way for you and your little artists to spend an autumn afternoon? Before raking those leaves, why not pick a few up and create some magnificent works of art together.

Materials: fallen leaves, paints, paintbrushes, crayons, markers, paper, glue, pencils, scrapbook (optional)

Directions

- Ready, set, go and gather your leaves and art supplies. You and your kids can make leaf prints by painting one side of a leaf (vein-side up) and then pressing it onto paper. Or you can create leaf stencil art by laying a leaf



- down on a piece of paper and painting over the edge of it onto the paper to create an outline.
- You can even try natural textures by placing paper on top of a leaf and rubbing nice and hard with a crayon.
- Finally, if you and your family have a few hours to spend on an autumn night, create a wonderful work of art just ready for framing by first pressing a leaf between two heavy books and then painting it with the colors and designs of your choice.

38. Make a Sundial

An old way to tell the time was to use the sun and the shadows it cast. You can make a sundial to put in your backyard that will tell you what time it is.

Materials: one foot square piece of heavy card stock, block of wood, thumbtacks

Directions

- Fold the heavy card stock corner to corner, then cut the card in half.
- Fold a flap on the bottom of the card to tuck into the block of wood.
- Using thumbtacks, attach the card to the wood block, making sure the triangle is straight up and down.
- Place the sundial on a flat surface in the sun. Every hour, mark off where the shadow is cast.
- You might even want to paint a nature design on the wood block.
- Remember to keep the sundial facing the same direction so your hour marks will be accurate.

39. Rock on with Rock Art

Go on a walk, find a few rocks, and have some fun!

Materials: small rocks, water-based paint, paintbrushes or sponges, water, recyclable plastic containers, marker, white glue, newspapers

Directions

- Clean all the dirt off of your rocks and let them dry. Now decide what you are going to create: a picture, an animal, a funky paperweight. It's up to you!
- Begin painting your rock with the designs and colors of your choice. If you like, you can draw some lovely pictures using markers instead of paint.
- When you are finished decorating and the paint is completely dry, it's time to seal the rock. Do this by mixing some white glue with a little bit of water in a container and brushing some of the glue mixture onto the rock to seal in the beauty.
- That's it, you're finished and can move on to the next one!

40. Painted Nature Pictures

Celebrate the coming of each season by creating nature pictures that will make great refrigerator art.

Materials: powdered tempera paint (assorted colors), craft glue, sand, nature materials (such as flowers, feathers, twigs, leaves, stones), a small mixing bowl for each color of paint, newspaper, paintbrush, construction paper

Directions

- Take a walk and collect the materials that you'll use for your picture. Flat objects like leaves, flowers, or feathers will work best.
- Cover the area you'll be working on with newspaper in case of spills.
- Sift out any small rocks or shells from the sand.
- Put equal amounts of sand in each mixing bowl. Stir the powdered paint into the sand until you have the color you want.
- Lay the nature items flat on the newspaper. Carefully brush a layer of craft glue over each item to secure it on the paper.



Observation Activities: People, Places, and Things

41. My Neighborhood

Directions

- Take a walk around your neighborhood and look at what makes it unique.
- Point out differences from and similarities to other places. Can your child distinguish various types of homes and shops?
- Look at the buildings and talk about their uses. Are there features built to conform to the weather or topography? Do the shapes of some buildings indicate how they were used in the past or how they are used now? These observations help children understand the character of a place.

42. Cloud Watching

This classic activity is still one of the best ways to spend an afternoon. What a great way to spend thirty minutes of quiet quality time with your young child! Find a nice clear area where you and your child can lie down and watch the clouds. Be sure to encourage him to use his imagination. Does he see animals, people, or other shapes?

43. Draw a Cloud Scene

Materials: paper, crayons

Directions

- Draw the cloud scene you saw while on a walk or when you look out the window.
- If there are no clouds on a sunny or rainy day, draw clouds from pictures in your imagination.

44. Write a Cloud Story

Materials: paper, pencil or pen

Directions: Use this story starter: "Hi. I am a cloud. My name is _____."

45. Walk, Observe, and Write!

Materials: notebook, pencil or pen

Directions

- Talk a walk around your neighborhood and look for things you never noticed before.
- Talk with your child about the sites and things you observe.
- Return home, to school, or to your original location and immediately write about your walk and what you saw.

Extensions

- Does anything you write inspire you to write some more? Maybe a poem or a longer story?
- Did you observe what people were doing or saying?
- Create a dialogue and imagine what the people you saw were saying.

46. First-to-See Activity

This is a fun game to play in the car or while taking a walk.

Directions

- Think of an object.
- The first one to see it gets to pick the next object to search for.

Extensions

- Change the rule to be the first one who sees an object three times.
- Make it the first one to see three items in a sequence, like a car, a baby, and an airplane.

47. Time Capsule

Help your child write a letter expressing his or her likes and dislikes, and then make a time capsule to put it in.

Materials: container for time capsule, heavy-duty tape, marker



Directions

- Make a time capsule together and be sure to include a few of your child's favorite things, such as pictures of your home and neighborhood, or ask her to draw some pictures from memory. Inspire him or her by reminding him or her to draw the sign of her favorite store or the local librarian, florist, grocer, mail carrier, or anyone else who is special to her.
- Help your child to write a letter describing her favorite activities, friends, subjects, teachers, etc.
- Place the letter and keepsakes into a container to form a time capsule. Date the capsule, seal it with heavy tape, and put it away for a year, labeling it with the date you will open it.

Extension

- Have your child help to make a time capsule for you, selecting things that you care about.

48. Stargazing

Materials: blanket, astronomy book (optional), flashlight (optional), snack (optional)

Directions

- Let your kids stay up later than usual on a clear summer evening when there is no moon.
- When it's really dark, go outside and look at the stars.
- If you live in a city, the city lights may make it hard to see the stars, so drive to the country if you can.
- Bring a blanket, lie on your backs, and look at the constellations.

49. Puddle Jumping

Being told that it is okay to jump in puddles will bring squeals of delight. Go out together dressed in rain gear and stomp in the puddles.

Materials: puddles after a rainy day or a lawn watering

Extensions

- Take the lead by dragging your feet gently through the water.
- Play follow the leader as you play in the water.
- Hold hands and jump with both feet into shallow puddles.

50. Color of the Day

Before you set out on a car trip, choose a color of the day.

Directions

- As you're driving in the car, shopping at the grocery store, or waiting at the doctor's office, ask your toddler point to all the things she sees that match the color you've chosen.
- Help her identify those items.

Bonus Activities!

Art from Found Items

1. Found and Funky Picture Frame

If you find an old picture frame at a garage sale for a few cents, buy it. Even if it has banged up wood and no glass, you can turn it into something fabulous!

Materials: old picture frame, house paint or craft paint, paintbrushes or old sponges, decorative scraps (fabric, aluminum foil, sand), glue, safety scissors, something nifty that's special to you (an old toy, a piece of mirror, a seashell, a leaf), plastic grocery bag, sandpaper (optional), cardboard (optional)

Directions

- Remove the glass and the backing from the frame. If your frame has no backing, cut a piece of cardboard that will fit inside the frame (an adult should help with this step). Sand the frame if the wood is in really bad shape; if not, you're ready to begin.



- Starting with one color, paint the frame. When the first coat of paint is dry, you can add another coat. Or choose another color of paint and using the plastic bag as a paintbrush, dab paint onto the frame until you get a nice crinkly texture.
- While the paint dries, take the backing you removed or the cardboard you cut to size and begin decorating it. You can glue some aluminum foil onto the cardboard for a funky look or paint it or glue fabric on it. You can even glue sand onto it for a rustic look! When the cardboard is decorated and dry, glue something special onto it: a piece of mirror, an old toy, a watch part, or even a stone.
- Put the frame together by slipping the cardboard into the frame and attaching it using glue. If the frame doesn't already have a hook on the back, then add one. That's it—you've created a treasure from trash!

2. Seashell Magnets

When you take your kids to the beach this summer, have them bring home some seashells for this fun activity! Magnetic seashells will hold just about anything on your refrigerator—especially those crazy pictures of your family at the beach!

Materials: seashells, small dried or silk flowers, magnetic strips, low-temperature glue gun

Directions

- In the opening of the seashells, let your child arrange the flowers however he or she likes.
- Using the glue gun, carefully secure the flowers in the shell.
- Cut the magnetic strip to fit the back of the seashell and affix it with glue. Let the glue dry.
- Now your child has created beautiful seashell magnets that all year long will remind you of those sunny days by the seashore!

3. Eggshell Mosaics

Using eggshells and his or her imagination, your child can create unique mosaiclike designs.

Materials: eggshells (at least four), food coloring or tempera paints, small bowls, water, rolling pin, paper towels, glue, paper, pencil, hairspray

Directions

- Your child can choose the food coloring or paints he or she wants to use in his picture and decide what he or she is going to draw.
- Remove the egg from the shell by poking a hole at the top and bottom of the eggshell with a safety pin and blowing the egg out from the bottom end.
- Dye the eggshells different colors using food coloring or tempera paints. Let the shells dry on paper towels.
- Crush the eggshells with a rolling pin. Make them small enough that they will lie flat, but not so small that they are too difficult to handle. You may want to separate the eggshells by color on individual paper towels.
- Ask your child to draw a picture in pencil on the paper.
- Glue the various colors of eggshells to the paper to color in his picture. Help him or her fill in blanks with little pieces. (Eggshells can be slippery.)
- Spray the picture with hairspray to create a shiny gloss.
- Hang the picture where everyone will be able to see it. Be sure to add his or her name at the bottom so everyone can complement the artist!

4. Summer Wreath of Found Items in Nature

Make summer souvenirs into a household decoration!

Materials: heavy cardboard, large- and medium-size bowls or pots, paintbrush, glue, summer treasures (flowers, leaves, sand, small pebbles, seashells), yarn or string, scissors, markers, crayons, other decorative items (optional)

Directions

- Trace the outer circle for your wreath by drawing around the large pot or bowl on the cardboard and cut out the circle.
- Then, using the smaller pot, trace another circle inside the one you just made and cut around the smaller circle. Now you have the pattern for your wreath.



- If you'd like, color or paint the wreath.
- Using the scissors, poke a small hole in the top of the wreath.
- Thread several inches of the string or yarn through the hole, tie the ends in a knot, and slide the string so the knot is hidden behind the wreath. This is the hanger.
- Using the paintbrush, cover the wreath completely with glue.
- Dust a layer of sand over the glue so that the entire wreath is covered.
- Let the wreath dry for about ten minutes and then gently shake off any excess sand.
- Use glue to add the treasures you've collected to complete your summer wreath.

5. Seashell Symphony

Take a walk on a beach with your kids to find shells for this project, or if that's not possible, check out your local craft store for bags of shells. This shell wind chime should be hung in a garden or on a porch where it will make lovely music when moved by a breeze. Parents should assist younger children with this activity.

Materials: plastic milk jug, scissors, hammer, nail, two dozen shells, cord

Directions

- Cut around the plastic jug an inch from the bottom. Discard the rest of the jug or save it to make a scoop. Using the hammer and nail, make six holes in the center of this piece of plastic.
- Using the hammer and nail, make a hole in the top of each of the shells. Some shells might break, so you'll need to have a couple of backups.
- Cut six lengths of cord that are each fifteen inches long. String four shells on each piece of cord, making a knot in between the shells to hold them in place. Thread the ends of the cord into the holes in the plastic.
- Thread another length of cord through the first hole and knot it. Thread the other end through the last hole and knot it. If necessary, make two separate holes for this cord. Use the cord to hang your wind chime from a tree or porch.

6. Egg Carton Spider

Materials: black tempera paint, marker, or crayon, cardboard egg carton, scissors, black pipe cleaners, red construction paper, glue, thread or yarn

Directions

- Using paint, marker, or crayon, color the cup sections of an egg carton black.
- If using paint, wait until the paint dries, then cut the egg cups apart.
- Push pipe cleaners into each egg cup and bend them so they look like spiders' legs.
- Cut red eyes from construction paper and glue them onto the cups.
- Use thread or yarn to hang the spiders from a doorway or in the window.

7. Sand and Glue Art

This activity requires a little practice to get the hang of it, but the unique result makes it well worth the time.

Materials: paper, white glue, sand

Directions

- Write a message or draw a picture on paper using glue. Try to avoid globs of glue and be sure to leave the paper flat on the table while working.
- Before the glue dries, sprinkle lightly with sand.
- Allow the work to remain unmoved for at least half an hour and then shake off the excess sand.

Extensions

- For variety, use colored sand from a hobby store.
- Use colored glue that you make yourself by adding food coloring.

