

Outside Play: A Sense of Wonder

Children are natural scientists, driven to explore the world around them. They are influenced by the people who care for them. For example if the important adults in their lives love to be outside and look with awe at interesting animals and plants, children will learn the importance of respecting nature. Encourage natural curiosity.

Children should spend time outside every day, at least 1 hour per day, weather permitting. A simple nature walk around the neighborhood or even just the playground can yield rich experiences.

Here are some idea and activities to do with children outdoors:

- **Tape Nature Bracelet**
 - Using masking tape make a bracelet for each child (sticky side out).
 - As you go on a nature walk with the children or even a walk around the play area, let the children put flowers, leaves, seeds, etc. on the sticky side of the tape.
- **Gardening with Children**
 - Gardening is not terribly satisfying to very young children because it takes so long to see the results, but they do like the process.
 - Let them help you dig with small shovels.
 - Notice any worms or bugs, but leave them there.
 - Let the children help plant small plants or seeds.
 - Let the children help water the plants or seeds with a watering can or hose.
 - Every day notice the progress of the plants. Talk with children about what they need to help make them grow.
- **Safe place for Infants**
 - Set aside a safe area for infants to explore.
 - Blankets on grass in a shady area.
 - A small pool (empty – no water) for them to sit and play in.
- **Water play Outdoors**
 - Use buckets, dishes, shovels, clear hoses, funnels, things that float or sink, eye droppers, etc to let children explore and discover with water.
- **Messy Play Outdoors**
 - Painting on sheets or large paper with spray bottles, brushes of all kinds, plungers, fly swatters, potato mashers, sponges, etc.

For outdoor safety tips and information on sunscreen and insect repellent please look at the Health and Safety link on the www.ndchildcare.org website.

Simple Steps: Developmental Activities for Infants, Toddlers, and Two-Year-Olds.

Miller, Karen. Gryphon House, Inc.

The Outside Play and Learning Book: Activities for Young Children. Miller, Karen.

Gryphon House, Inc.