



Nature is amazing and wherever you live, it's happening all around you, all the time!

If you've never really paid attention to the trees, plants, flowers, insects, animals and birds in your area, it's time to pack up a few essentials and head out on a nature walk!

Equipment

- Map (optional)
- Rucksack
- Notebook
- Pen or pencil
- Small glass jar with a lid (an empty coffee, jam or baby food jar is ideal)
- Bottle of water or juice
- Light waterproof jacket
- Airtight plastic container
- Comfortable shoes
- Camera (optional)
- Flexible tape measure (optional)
- Snack (optional)
- Binoculars (optional)



Getting Ready

1 First of all you need to decide where your nature trail is going to take you. You could either walk in a place you know - your local park or a nearby wood - or use a map to find a safe footpath and follow that.

! Always take an adult with you on nature walks. They'll help you stay safe and they might stop you getting lost, too!

2 Find a rucksack, or similar bag which leaves your hands free for investigating, and into it pack a notebook, pen or pencil, small glass jar, bottle of water or juice, a waterproof and an airtight container.

3 Strap on a pair of comfortable shoes, and you're ready to go!

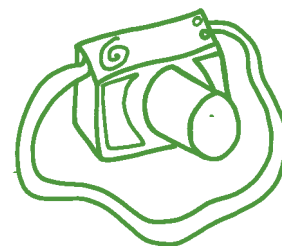


On The Trail

4 Use your notebook to write down what you find, or draw pictures of things you see. If you're a good artist, you might want to take a sketch pad, too. If you find something and you don't recognise it - a type of tree, a plant or an insect - describe it in as much detail as you can and then look it up and find out what it's called when you get home.



5 If you've got a camera, why not take it along to snap pictures to go with your notes and descriptions?



6 If you're going somewhere with lots of trees, take a flexible tape measure and have a go at working out how old some of them are. Wrap the tape measure around the tree trunk - if it's a really big one, you might need a bit of help with this - and make a note of the measurement. As a rough guide, a tree grows about 2.5cm each year, so divide your measurement by that number to give you an idea of how long it's been standing there. For example, if a tree measures 80cm around the trunk, it's probably about 32 years old ($80 / 2.5 = 32$).



7 Take some crayons with your notebook and use them to make bark or leaf rubbings. Just rest a paper page over the tree or leaf, rub gently with the side of a crayon and watch the textured pattern appear.



8 Interested in insects? Look under logs, plants, on flowers and tree trunks to see what sort you can find. When you spot one, scoop it into your jam jar to get a closer look and write or draw what you see. How does the insect move? Does it make a sound? How is it suited to living in the place you found it? Carefully let the insect go after a few minutes and if you moved logs or leaves to find it, remember to put those back as they were, too.



9 Don't forget to use all of your senses on a nature trail:

- Listen to the sounds of nature. These will change depending on the time of year and where you are. Write down what you hear and then plan another nature trail in a different season so you can compare the sounds.

- What can you smell? Always be careful where you put your nose, but try sniffing flowers, plants and the air around you. Notice how different it smells if you're in a shady wooded area or next to a stream.

- Try looking at nature from lots of different angles. Stand right under a tree and look up at the pattern the leaves and branches make, peep into holes or through hollow logs, crouch down and look under rocks or plants to see what's happening on the ground.

- Never eat anything you find on a nature trail. If you're lucky, you might spot wild berries or mushrooms and toadstools in woods. They're lovely to look at, but to stay safe, leave them unpicked. That's not to say you can't taste anything - walking can be hard work, so take a snack (bananas or apples are great) in your backpack!



10 If you enjoy watching birds, why not try and borrow a pair of binoculars to take on your nature trail? Write down all the different types of bird you see and compare them to those you can spot in your back garden, or outside your window.

11 You should never disturb anything you find growing on your nature walk - don't pick flowers or pull leaves from trees and plants - but you can collect things which are lying on the ground. Look out for interestingly-shaped fallen leaves, acorns, pinecones or conkers. Store them in your plastic container so you can have a proper look at them when you get home.



12 Is there a lake, river, stream or brook along the route of your trail? Don't get too close to the edge, as even the most shallow stream can be dangerous, but do enjoy the different kinds of plants, animals and insects which gather near water.

Making Memories

13 When you get home, why not put the things you wrote, drew, saw and collected into a scrapbook or nature journal? If you enjoyed the walk, try doing it again at a different time of year and comparing the things you saw, heard, smelled and touched.

