

Spending Time Outdoors with Your Child

Add a short walk to your evening routine. After dinner and dishes, hit the pavement. Look up at the stars, keep an ear out for sounds of the night, tell a story about when you were young, and listen while your child tells you about his or her day.

Plant, tend, and harvest flowers or vegetables. You can plant seeds or plants in a container (pot, window box, bucket, or even a trash can) in your yard or a neighborhood garden plot. Your preschooler will enjoy digging, weeding, and watching the plants flourish. You could grow salad—cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, and lettuce—or plant flowers that grow to different heights, like marigolds and sunflowers.

Enjoy all kinds of weather. Try to go outdoors, regardless of weather conditions. Plan short activities when it is very cold or hot; enjoy more outside time when the weather is fine. Preschoolers love walking in the rain; just be sure to wear waterproof boots and hooded raincoats. Layers are important on cold days—as you get warmer you can take off a jacket, hat, or mittens. In summertime be sure everyone wears a sun hat and sunscreen and drinks plenty of water.

Our class goes outdoors as often as possible. The children run, swing, climb, ride trikes, pull wagons, go for walks, and kick and throw balls. They also do many of the activities we enjoy inside, like reading, painting, doing puzzles, eating snack, and making music. We believe that almost anything children do indoors can be an outdoor activity too. Family time outdoors benefits children and parents.

Play games. Share the games you played when you were a child, like hopscotch, jacks, Simon Says, and charades. Play board games on a picnic table or blanket. Introduce skills preschoolers will one day use to play sports, such as kicking or dribbling a ball or hitting a foam ball back and forth using light rackets.

Enjoy the nature all around you. Whether they live on farms or in apartments, children need experiences in the natural world. Point out the nature all around you—new leaves on trees in the spring, bugs living under a rock or in a decaying tree stump, birds flying from bush to bush. Go strawberry or apple picking or visit a park, nature center, or farmers' market. Bring along nature guides, paper, crayons, measuring tools, containers, a magnifying glass, and binoculars so you can help your child become an enthusiastic nature investigator.



Tell us about the fun and learning you and your child enjoy outdoors. We will share your ideas with our classroom community.

A message from your child's teacher