

Environmental Education Activities

The following activities can be easily customized to any grade level, and requires little to no equipment.

“Hold the Front”

The leader is followed by the hikers in a single-file as they hike along the trail. The leader asks questions about things observed (or general nature questions) such as: “What is the name of that bird/tree/rock/flower, etc?” If the first person in line answers correctly, that player stays in the number 1 position. If the answer is incorrect, the person moves to the end of the line and #2 attempts to answer the question. Each player who fails to give the correct response goes to the end of the line. The object is to stay in the #1 position as long as possible.

“Images”

Have students sit in a circle. Choose one leader in each group. If you have a large group, divide them into smaller groups of 6-7. Find one natural object in the area for each group, such as a large lichen-covered branch, pinecone, piece of bark, handful of topsoil, fist-sized rock, and so on. Tell the groups that you’re going to start moving an object around the circle, and each person will take a turn describing it. Students will have to use all of their senses (except taste) to describe the object. There are two rules students must follow: First, a student should not stop describing the object until the leader says *pass*; and second, a student cannot say something that someone else has already mentioned. This means group members will need to really tune in to what others are saying.

You can speed up or slow down the “pass” command according to how the game is going. You can also swap the objects between various groups, even before everyone has had a chance to talk. This activity increases students’ creativity as they “dig deep” to find new ways of describing familiar things.

“Poem Hike” 2 Variations

Variation 1 (Individual): Let students’ creativity with nature flow. Take them out and encourage them to individually write and illustrate rhyming, free-verse, haiku, cinquain, or other poems. Encourage students to share their poems with others.

Variation 2 (Group): Place students in different sensory positions to observe a single tree or other natural object. Invite them to describe the tree from their points of view by providing two adjectives. Some students might be placed with their heads tilted toward the tree’s canopy; others might focus on the root system; others might have a close-up view of the bark; and others might focus on just one branch. Several other students may be blindfolded and asked to describe the tree using their sense of touch and/or smell. Finally, others may have a “wide-angle” view of the entire tree. Ask a volunteer to record the adjectives from each student. Collectively, students then create a class poem. Give a dramatic reading of this poem as everyone gets another chance to see the whole tree.

“Mystery Bag”

Find several natural objects and place each into a separate bag. Have a student look inside and describe the object to the rest of the group without giving obvious clues. Invite the group to guess the object’s identity.

Variation: Have students pass the bag around the group *without* looking inside. Students can say one descriptive word aloud as the bag is being passed, or students can remain silent until everyone has had a turn. Take turns guessing the mystery object.