

Making Observations



These simple activities are a great and fun way to warm up your sense of sight and hearing before going outside and exploring nature.

Your Leaf

Grades: All grades

Activity Level: Medium

Materials: Various leaves; bag to put them in

Begin with the group sitting in a circle passing around a leaf. As the leaf is passed around, students will be asked to describe the leaf. The teacher will explain that all of the descriptions students have of the leaf are called observations.

Students will then get to play a game where they reach into a paper bag full of leaves and pick one leaf. Students will have a few minutes to make observations and study their leaf before returning it to the bag.

The teacher will then shake the paper bag full of leaves and dump them in the middle of the circle. Students will come up one at a time and try to identify their leaf based on the observations they made. Students might notice this is difficult to do. Ask the students how they could identify their leaves more easily.

Harvesting our Experiences

- Was this difficult to do? Why?
- What would you do differently to more easily find your leaf?



Is Something Different About You?

Grades: 1st and up

Activity Level: Medium



The group starts in a semi-circle, with one person being "It" in front of the group. The group is instructed to study the person who's "It". After a minute or so of observing, the group turns around and the person who's "It" will change one thing about their appearance. For the first round, instruct "It" to make the change fairly obvious.

The group turns back around and has to name what has changed. Now do it again, but make the changes more subtle. Students can also partner up and play against each other.

Harvesting our Experiences

- Do you think you were good or bad at this? Why?
- Did it get easier or harder? If it got easier, what changed to make it easier?
- Is there anything you did, that will help you observe things in nature?



imagoearth.org
hello@imagoearth.org

Imago's Branching Out Program leads outdoor education at schools, builds and supports outdoor learning stations, and provides teacher resources for outdoor learning. Contact Imago for information on how we can help you get your students learning in nature.

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A Wise Old Owl

Grades: All grades

Activity Level: Calm

Paying attention to what you hear starts with a simple directive, “Be quiet and be still”. Though it sounds easy, that can be tough to do for young people. Use simple tasks to help focus your group. Tasks such as:

1. Count how many different sounds you hear.
2. Do you hear sounds of people? What nature sounds do you hear?

This simple poem can further prepare your group.

The Wise Old Owl

*A wise old owl lived in an oak
The longer he lived the less he spoke
The less he spoke the more he heard
Let's all be like that wise old bird.*

One more thing before you start. Remind your students that telling other students to “Be quiet” is also not being quiet. So everyone needs to be quiet for this to work.

Now that students have their tasks and their inspiration to be quiet like the Wise Old Owl, you are ready. Ask students to close their eyes, be still and have them listen. Listen for about a minute, a little less for younger students.



Sound Mapping

Grades: 3rd and up

Activity Level: Medium

Materials: Paper, writing utensil, (optional) clipboard

This activity is a way to observe sounds in a wider space.

The concept is simple, your students will make a map of the space they are exploring, and then they will listen in a few different places. They'll note what they hear on their map.

If you want a little more control, designate listening spaces and then have students rotate through the spaces, or you can let the students pick their own distinct listening spots.

For older students you can use your sound map to introduce mapping concepts, such as legends, symbols, cardinal directions, and scale.



Harvesting our Experiences

- Where was it the loudest? Where was it the quietest?
- Was there any spot that you heard more birds or other sounds of nature? Why do you think that was?