

Tree Games and Activities

Tree Tag

This is a fun variation of tag that helps the players learn to identify different tree species.

Object - The players (squirrels) try to keep away from the tagger (predator) and make it to the safe area without being tagged.

Game Play - The players are designated as squirrels with a tagger being the predator. The game leader will call out the name of a tree or its description (depending on the age of players) within the game area, and squirrels must race to the correct tree without being caught (tagged) by the predator. Once the squirrel is touching the correct tree they cannot be tagged. *Please make sure that the trees in the game area do not have any POISON IVY growing on them.* If the squirrel goes to the incorrect tree or is caught, he/she will then become a predator and try to catch remaining squirrels. The game leader continues to call out trees until there is only one squirrel remaining. The final squirrel wins the game.

Discussion – After the game, talk with the players about the types of trees that were in the game area and their unique attributes. See if the players can distinguish between the deciduous and evergreen trees, and ask them what they noticed that made the trees identifiable. Discuss the role that trees play in the forest and the food and habitat they provide to wildlife.



Log Tag

This variation on the game of freeze tag helps players learn the names of tree species.

Object – The players must avoid being tagged by staying out of reach of the tagger, or falling to the ground and freezing like a log while calling out their chosen tree species.

Game Play – One player is designated as the tagger. When the game leader starts the game, all of the players must keep away from the tagger. If a player is unable to escape, he/she can drop to the ground like a log and yell out a specific tree name. To make the game more difficult, the game leader can make a rule that a tree species can only be used once during game play. If the player correctly yells out a tree species, then the tagger must move on to another player and the “log” can stand up and return to playing. Once a player is tagged, he/she must freeze in a standing position with his/her arms out like tree branches creating a frozen forest. The last untagged player in the frozen forest is the winner.

Discussion – When the game is over, talk with the players about the tree species that they chose when they were fallen logs. Ask why they chose their specific tree, and if they have ever seen one in a forest. Look up and discuss some of the interesting details like lifespan, lifecycle, range, and uses of the trees that they chose.



Find Your Tree

This activity encourages participants to experience the natural world using all of their senses. Participants discover details of the forest that might otherwise be overlooked.

Object – A player is blindfolded and led to a tree then taken back to the starting point. The player's blindfold is removed and he/she must find his/her way back to the tree that he/she had experienced without sense of sight.

Game Play – The group splits into pairs. One partner is blindfolded. The other partner then leads the blindfolded player to a tree of his/her choice within the game area.

*Make sure that all game area trees are free of POISON IVY!

* The blindfolded partner is given a few minutes and must use his/her sense of touch, smell, and hearing to familiarize him/herself with the tree. The blindfolded player is then led back to the starting point. The blindfold is removed, and the player is then asked to find the tree to which they had been led. The partners then switch and the game is restarted.

Discussion – When both partners have had a chance to be blindfolded, ask the partners to discuss their experience with each other. Prompt them to share the things that they noticed while blindfolded that made their tree stand out, and, while leading the other player, the details that were missed. Bring the group together and discuss how the players used their alternate senses, and what they noticed. Talk about the ways the trees in the game area were unique, and ways that they were similar.



Anybody Home?

This activity encourages participants to view the forest/park as an interconnected ecosystem. Players observe the relationships between the animals and the trees.

Object – The players must use their observation skills and imagination to find links within the forest/park.

Game Play – Take a walk through your local park or forest and try to imagine the types of critters that live in/depend on the trees around you. Take turns looking for critter holes and nests, and then talk about what you think might live there and why. Make sure that everyone has a chance to observe the findings up close. Encourage participants to look

high and low, and make sure that they are considering creatures both big and small.

Allow participants to elaborate on other players' findings.

Discussion – When the group finishes the walk, take a minute to discuss what everyone found. Talk about the different types of creatures that might live in the forest/park, and be sure to discuss the often unseen insects, plants, and fungi that depend on trees. Ask the participants if they noticed much diversity in the trees of the forest/park, and how this would affect an ecosystem. Talk about ways that trees support forest life through habitat and food production. Also touch on the value of trees to wildlife in the different stages of the tree's life cycle such as snags and rotting logs.



Tree Faces

This is an observation activity that encourages participants to look very closely at the trees in their woods and use their imagination to find the shapes of faces in the bark or form of a tree.

Object – Observe trees and use your imagination to create stories about the faces you find in a tree.

Game Play – Take a walk through the park or forest and look closely at the trees. See if you can find the shapes of faces in the bark, leaves, and roots. Use a camera to take a picture of your tree faces, or bring a notebook to make a sketch. Try to imagine a story about the face you have discovered in the tree. Give your tree face a name, and ask yourself questions like: Who is he/she? Where did he/she come from? How did he/she end up frozen in the tree? When you get home, make a tree face album and include the short story about your imagined character.

Discussion – After everyone has had a chance to make their album, get in a group and have everyone share what/who they discovered in the woods. Make sure to point out how individual trees were unique. Talk about how the tree diversity during your walk affected the look/feel of the forest. Ask everyone to share something interesting that they observed while on the walk.



Photo Scavenger Hunt

Use your phone or camera to do this fun scavenger hunt that follows a leave no trace ethic. Snap fun pictures of members of your team discovering these often overlooked treasures of nature!

Object - Be the first team to photograph all of the items on the list and win the title of Expert Nature Sleuth!

Game Play - Split into teams of 2-4 people. Each team is given a scavenger hunt list and must take a photo of a team member with each of the scavenger hunt items. Only take photographs, and never remove the items from where they were found. When all items have been found, the team must return to the game leader to have their photos checked for accuracy. The first team to correctly photograph all of the scavenger hunt items is the winner.

Discussion - Bring all of the teams together to review their scavenger hunt findings. Discuss as a group the differences between the easily found items and the more difficult ones. Would this change at different times of year? Talk about how the forest goes through annual changes, and give examples of what happens seasonally (flowers create fruit, birds migrate, trees drop leaves in the winter, etc.).



Tree Crafts

Leaf Rubbing Collage

This art project utilizes a technique that transfers the imprint of a leaf onto paper, and brings the beauty of nature into your home!

What you will need:

- Construction paper
- Assortment of fallen leaves collected from the ground (do not pull leaves from living plants)
- Colored pencils or crayons

Make it!

Place the leaves with the raised vein side up on the table. Gently place a piece of construction paper on top of the leaf making sure that the leaf is where you want it to appear on the paper. Use a colored pencil or crayon to color back and forth across the leaf

starting at one side and working your way to the other. The leaf imprint will appear on your paper! Repeat this process with different leaf shapes in different places on your paper to create a beautiful leaf collage. As an extra challenge, try to identify and label the tree species of the leaves.

Tree People

This craft uses things that are found in nature to create forest characters that you bring to life!

What you will need:

- Fallen Leaves, small sticks, bark and tree nuts that are found on the ground.
- Construction paper or card stock
- Glue (Craft glue is fine for lightweight items, but hot glue works best for the woody and heavier items)
- Colored Pencils or Crayons
- Scissors

Make it!

Arrange what you collected on the construction paper to form bodies, legs, arms, feet, etc. Use your imagination with the placement of these items! Large leaves can be bodies, and small round leaves can be feet. Twigs can be legs and arms, and acorns and acorn caps can be a hat or a face (just draw on the eyes). Feel free to use the scissors to cut the forest supplies down to size, and use the pencils/crayons to draw on the head, face, or any other missing part. When you have created your forest friend, glue it into place. Make sure to give him/her a name! As an added challenge, try to identify the types of trees that provided your woodland supplies.



Pine Cone Critters

This craft uses supplies from nature to create an adorable little critter that you can take home!

What you will need:

- Pine cones of different shapes and sizes (make sure that the ones you collect have already released their seeds and have spaces between the scales)
- Various forest materials collected from the ground such as small twigs, nuts, feathers, moss, lichen, etc.
- Hot glue or craft glue
- Google eyes (optional)

Make it!

Spend some time looking at your pine cone, and try to envision it as a little forest critter. Use the forest materials you collected to create your critter. Small twigs can be used for legs, a tail, or a snout. Feathers can be hair, nuts can be heads or hats, and moss, leaves or lichen can be tails. Be creative and try things in different places. When you have decided how you want your critter to look, use the hot glue/craft glue to secure the parts to the pine cone. I like to add google eyes to bring the critter to life. Have fun making this craft, and know that your imagination is the limit!

