



Items Needed for Lesson:

- Ice Breaker
 - Large Bucket or Kiddie Pool
 - Items to act like fish
 - Fishing rod or net
- Scavenger Hunt
 - Printed scavenger hunt checklist (use pictures or small words)
 - Clipboard or firm paper surfaces
 - Crayons or pencils
 - Small backpacks or bags (optional for carrying items)
 - First aid kit and safety supplies (for adults)
- Build a Bridge
 - Small sticks, twigs, leaves, bark, stones (gathered from the ground)
 - String or twine (optional)
 - Toy animals or small figures (for testing the bridge)
 - Rule or tape measure (optional)
- Community Service
 - Rocks to Paint
 - Paint/Paintbrush
 - Markers

Time for Each Part of the Lesson

Ice Breaker - 15 minutes

Career Connections- 5 Minutes

Hike and Nature Scavenger Hunt - 15 Minutes

Build a Mini Nature Bridge - 30 minutes

Community Service - 30-45 minutes

Outdoor Education Lesson

Introduction

We are going to become outdoor explorers! The outdoors is our classroom, and we learn best by moving, creating, and discovering together. We will use our eyes to observe, our ears to listen, and our hands to explore nature all around us. We'll start with a fun icebreaker called Backyard Fishing, where we'll practice taking turns, following directions, and learning about fish and aquatic life. Then we'll give back to our community by creating Kindness Rocks—painting rocks with positive messages to place along trails or in public spaces to brighten someone's day. Next, we'll head out on a hike and scavenger hunt, searching for plants, animals, tracks, and natural clues that show how living things depend on each other. We'll finish by working as a team to build a mini nature bridge using sticks and natural materials, learning about balance, problem-solving, and teamwork. Along the way, we'll also learn how people can turn their love of the outdoors into careers like wildlife biologists, park rangers, and outdoor educators and how we can all help care for nature every day. So grab your explorer mindset, be ready to help your team, and let's get outside and learn together!

Ice Breaker

Backyard Bucket Fishing

1. Set Up the Pond:
 - a. Fill a large bucket or kiddie pool with water (no water option if using indoors).
 - b. Place the "fish" inside—number or color them for added challenges.
2. Fish for Fun!
 - a. Kids take turns using the fishing rod or net to "catch a fish from the pond."
3. Learning Game Options:
 - a. Color Match: "Catch all the red fish."
 - b. Number Challenge: "Catch the fish with the number 3."
 - c. Math Game: "Catch two fish and add their numbers together."

Materials

- Small plastic or paper fish (sponges, laminated cutouts, pool noodles cut or foam shapes)
- Permanent marker to number fish. Color-coded can also be used
- Plastic bucket or kiddie pool for the "pond"
- Toy fishing rod (or DIY with a stick, string, and a magnet)
- Paper clips (attached to fish if using magnets)
- Net or small strainer

Bonus Activity: Let the kids decorate their own fish first, using foam cutouts or waterproof markers before fishing.

Career Connections

Invite a local outdoor professional to come talk to the students. Choose someone with a kid-friendly role in outdoor recreation, such as:

- Game, Fish, and Parks Employee
- Conservation Officer
- Wildlife Biologist
- State Parks Manager or Employee
 - Lifeguard
 - Camp Counselor

Some other careers in the outdoor education field are:

- **Conservation Educator** – Teaches stewardship of land and wildlife
- **Wildlife Technician** – Assists with wildlife research and habitat management
- **Forestry Technician** – Works with forest management and education programs
- **Park Naturalist** – Educates visitors about local plants, animals, and history
- **Outdoor Adventure Guide** – Leads activities like hiking, kayaking, rock climbing, or canoeing
- **Camp Counselor** – Guides youth in outdoor skills, teamwork, and leadership
- **Zoologist** – Researches animal behavior and health
- **Fisheries Biologist** – Studies fish populations and aquatic ecosystems

Community Service Project

Kindness Walk and Rock Drop

Kids paint or draw smiley faces, hearts, or kind words on small stones ahead of time (can be paired with a park cleanup activity). Then walk around the park and “drop kindness” by placing the stones in thoughtful places (i.e, near benches, trees, or paths, etc.).

Ask: “How do you think someone might feel when they find your kindness rock?”

Activity - Hike and Nature Scavenger Hunt

Materials

- Printed scavenger hunt checklist (use pictures or small words)
- Clipboard or firm paper surfaces
- Crayons or pencils
- Small backpacks or bags (optional for carrying items)
- First aid kit and safety supplies (for adults)

Instructions:

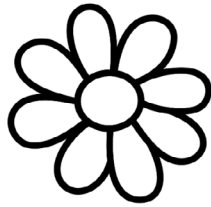
1. Warm-Up Discussion:
 - a. Ask “What kinds of fun things can we do outside?”
 - b. Talk about hiking, camping, exploring.
 - c. Review basic outdoor safety rules
 - i. Stay with the group
 - ii. Don’t touch wildlife
 - iii. Respect nature.
2. Go on a Guided Hike
 - a. Lead students on a slow walk or hike.
 - b. Pause to point out interesting plants, insects, birds, or natural features.
 - c. Encourage the use of sense:
 - i. “What do you hear? See? Smell?”
3. Scavenger Hunt
 - a. Hand out checklists and crayons/pencils.
 - b. Let kids check off or color in each item as they find it.
 - c. Help with reading and identifying if needed.
4. Reflect & Share
 - a. Sit in a circle and ask kids to share their favorite thing they found.
 - b. Ask: “Why is it fun to explore nature?”

Nature Scavenger Hunt Worksheet

Find the Items below on your scavenger hunt.



Leaf of any color



Flower



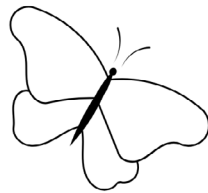
Rock



Stick



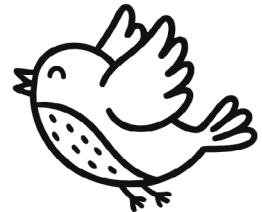
Pinecone or acorn



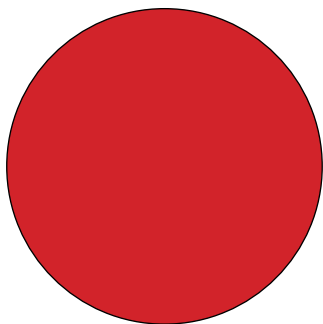
Butterfly or insect



Cloud



Bird



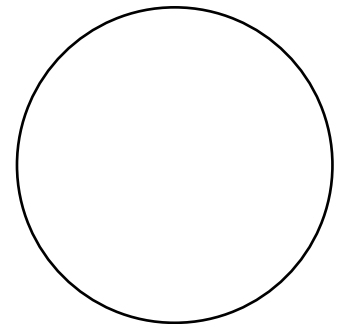
Something red



Something that makes noise



Grass



Something shaped like a circle

Activity - Build a Mini Nature Bridge

Materials

- Small sticks, twigs, leaves, bark, stones (gathered from the ground)
- String or twine (optional)
- Toy animals or small figures (for testing the bridge)
- Rule or tape measure (optional)

Instructions:

1. Explore and Collect:
 - a. Head to a park or backyard. Encourage the kids to collect small, safe, natural materials that they think could be used to build a bridge. Ask questions like:
 - i. “What makes this stick strong?”
 - ii. “Do you think this leaf can hold anything up?”
2. Plan the Bridge:
 - a. Find two rocks or logs to represent the “banks” of a river. Kids will build a bridge to connect them. Talk about what makes a good bridge: it needs to be strong, stable, and wide enough for a toy to cross.
3. Build the Bridge:
 - a. Let the kids build their bridge using the materials they found. Offer support, but encourage them to try different designs.
4. Test the Bridge:
 - a. Use a small toy to test the bridge. Can it hold the weight? Does it stay upright? Measure how long or wide it is.
5. Improve the Design:
 - a. Ask: “What would you change to make it stronger or longer?” Let them try rebuilding or reinforcing the bridge.

Reflection and Add On

Reflection Questions

- Why do some bridges fall and others stay up?
- Which materials worked best and why?

Optional Additional Activities:

- Draw the bridge design before and after building.
- Compare bridge types (beam, arch, suspension) with photos
- Create a nature journal entry