There's a reason they call it the great outdoors. ™

Guide for Outdoor Exploration

Specially created for

Remember playing freeze tag with the neighborhood kids until mom called you in for dinner? Sadly, today's kids probably won't.

America's children spend only four to seven minutes outside per day—not enough time for a game of tag, no matter how fast they run. Instead, they log more than seven hours per day in front of electronic media.

Playing outside is good for mind and body. National Wildlife Federation encourages all Americans to Be Out There™ and give back to our children what they don't even know they've lost: a connection to the natural world**.** Studies show daily time outdoors provides not only the simple joys found in nature, but also improves children's physical, mental and emotional health, boosts classroom performance and encourages stewardship over the environment.

National Wildlife Federation has teamed up with Meetup to create these customized materials just for you. Thanks for signing up to participate in our Meetup activities!

Time spent outdoors is a healthy and fun way for families to connect, free from day-to-day distractions and over-stuffed schedules. Enjoy!

Additional Resource and Articles:

You Can Help Get 100,000 Kids Outside—Take the Be Out There Pledge

Parents: 10 Reasons Kids Need Fresh Air

6 Reasons You Don't Go Outside—And How To Get Over Them

NatureFind: Locate Thousands of Outdoors Parks, Trails and Events Near You





6 Good Old-Fashioned Outdoor Games Parents Will Remember

Recapture your childhood by getting some fresh air with the children in your life and testing your skills at these “fondly remembered” games.

Capture the Flag

What You Need:

2 handmade flags such as a t-shirt or towel

2 different colored sets of arm or headbands made of crepe paper or ribbon

Formation: Divide the group into two teams. Identify each by a set of arm or headbands

How to Play:

Each team has its own flag and designated area. The goal is for each team to find the other team’s flag and bring it back to their home base. If a player gets caught in on enemy ground with the flag the player goes to jail and the flag is returned to home ground. The team that successfully brings the other team’s flag to its home base, without being caught, wins.

Red Rover

What You Need: Nothing!

How to Play:

Teams hold hands, forming two lines across from one another. A member of one team calls a member of the other team over by saying, “Red Rover, Red Rover, send [insert player’s name] over.” The player whose name is called then runs across to the other group, trying to break through the line. If the player succeeds, he picks a member of the opposite team to join his team.

Red Light - Green Light

What You Need: Nothing!

How to Play:

It stands a good distance off from the rest of the kids, with his back turned to the rest of the group. He calls, "Green Light!" and the children run toward him until he says, "Red Light.” It turns around and tries to catch anyone who is moving. If he sees someone moving, that person must go back to the Start line. Play continues until someone runs up and tags It. Try this game at night with flashlights for Light – No Light. When It turns around, turn the flashlight on instead of yelling, “Red Light.”



Good Old-Fashioned Outdoor Games
- Continued -

Kick the Can

What You Need:

Large can, like a 2 liter soda bottle or coffee canister

How to Play:

Designate someone It. This person then kicks the can as far as possible. After the can is kicked, It, counts to one hundred, while the other players hide. When the kicker spots someone, he calls out that person's name and races them back to the can. If the kicker reaches the can first, the hider stays in jail as the game continues. If the hider kicks the can first, the hider goes free and the game starts over. Hiders can leave their hiding spot to free prisoners by kicking the can. The game is over when everyone is in jail.

Duck Duck Goose

What You Need: Nothing!

How to Play:

The players sit in a circle on the ground as one person walks around the outside. As the player on the outside walks, they tap each sitting person's head and say "Duck, Duck, Duck", until they choose to say "Goose." The person selected as "Goose" stands up and chases the person who selected them around the circle. If the person who selects the Goose reaches the Goose's spot before being tagged, they win. If the Goose tags the person that selected them before the person can sit down in the Goose's spot, they get their seat back, and the original person selecting Duck, Duck, Goose has to start over or they go into the stew pot in the center of the circle.

Cat and Mouse

What You Need: Nothing!

How to Play:

Designate one player as the cat and one as the mouse. The rest of the players join hands in a circle with the mouse inside. As the mouse keeps away from the cat, it can't stay in the circle for more than five seconds. The players in the circle should lift their arms to let the mouse in and out of the circle as it runs from the cat. The cat can't enter the circle, but can reach inside to "catch" the mouse by tagging him. As a result, the other players can squeeze together to keep the cat from reaching into the circle. If the cat catches the mouse, the mouse becomes the cat and a new mouse is chosen.

BE OUT THERE



Nature Scavenger Hunt

All kids—from toddlers to teens—can become nature detectives

A scavenger hunt is a great way to explore your backyard, neighborhood, or any green space. It's fun for the whole family and a surefire activity for a play date. Here are some ways to adapt this game for every age:

TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

Teach little children to use their five senses to “hunt” for natural treasure. Here are some ideas to get started:

Sight: Have them find different colors in nature, or ask them if certain “outside” things remind them of “inside” things. (i.e. clouds look like marshmallows)

Hearing: With closed eyes, ask the child to tell you what they hear. Birds? Wind in the trees? Water gurgling in a stream?

Touch: Find a few natural objects with different textures—the bark of a tree, a pebble, grass. What does it feel like?

Taste: Here’s an opportunity to teach safety—eating things in nature is usually not a good idea! But some things they can taste, like berries or honeysuckle nectar—if they check with a knowledgeable grown-up first.

Smell: Again, have them close their eyes and smell the cool winter air, a flower, freshly cut grass.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KIDS

As kids get older, adding a little competition can help get them engaged in the outdoors. Here’s how Molly Balint, author of the Mommy Coddle blog, gets her kids outside on a nature hunt:

> *“My kids don't always wake up each morning and race out the door to play in the fresh air… Some days, I have to give them a little push. One of my favorite ways to get my children busy exploring their backyard habitat is to send them on a scavenger hunt. By giving them just a few items to search for around our yard, I find that they will quickly discover much more than what is on ‘the list.’ Send your children out with any "tools" you think they might need — a clipboard, pencils, a basket or bucket for collecting, a magnifying glass. Before you know it they'll be discovering all kinds of natural treasures in their own back yard.”*

Be Out There’s got the tools you need:

Nature scavenger hunt list Wildlife Observation Checklist Find Animal Homes

OLDER KIDS

Let’s face it: at a certain point, your kids will roll their eyes when you suggest a nature scavenger hunt. TV, video games, texting—technology is often tough competition for your kid’s attention. NWF believes that technology can be used as a tool to connect kids with nature.

Geocaching might be the ticket to getting your family off the couch and outside! You use a satellite-linked location finder (a GPS unit) to track down boxes filled with "treasures" of all kinds hidden outside. Visit www.geocaching.com.

Try to capture the wildlife in your neighborhood – with your camera, of course! Have your 13-18 year olds enter the youth competition in the *National Wildlife* Photo Contest.

BE OUT THERE



Using these writing and drawing pages, your children can be real nature detectives and record what they find in their backyard or neighborhood park.

My Nature Journal

Your name: _____ **Today's date:** _____

What is the weather like?

_____

_____

Where are you?

_____

_____

Who are you with?

_____

_____

What do you see?

_____

_____

What do you smell?

_____

_____

What do you hear?

_____

_____

What can you touch? How does it feel?

_____

_____

What else is special about what you are observing?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

BE OUT THERE



My Nature Journal

Your name: _____ **Today's date:** _____

Record what you are observing using sketches, pictures, words, seeds, leaves...anything!
But please be careful not to remove or disturb any natural items that might be useful to the critters you are observing, like nests, feathers, wildflowers and more.