

Create Your Dream Park

Target Audience (Grade)

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Classroom



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental exercise

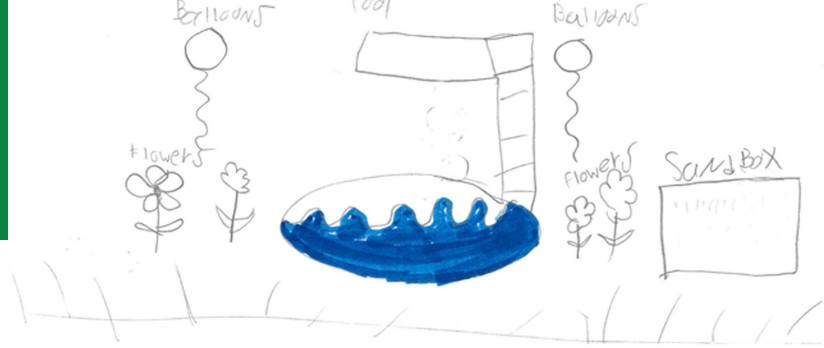


Format

Discussion/drawing/design

Materials

Paper, crayons or other drawing materials, magazines, scissors, gluesticks



Provide blank paper and crayons and/or collage materials (magazines, scissors, etc.) to group and invite your kids to craft their dream park. It can include anything they want, as long as it fits in the picture. Briefly discuss what they created. Discuss different ways to play and to be active in their park (i.e. climb on the playground, run around a track, play a sport, walk on a trail, etc.).

Optional: Who can come to your park? How do they get there? When do they visit?

Indoor Scavenger Hunt

Target Audience (Grade)

K-2



Setting

Classroom



Length and Difficulty

20 Minutes - Mental exercise



Format

Scavenger hunt

Materials

Nature or park-related objects, such as pine cones, leaves, twigs, stuffed animals, rocks, etc.



In this activity, kids will search for hidden objects around a classroom or indoor space. Tell them what park objects have been placed around the room for them to find. Give them 10 minutes to search, and return to discuss what they found.

Park Charades

Target Audience (Grade)

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Classroom



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Game

Materials

Paper, crayons or other writing materials



In this activity, kids will identify their favorite park activities, and act them out for their peers. Instruct kids to write a physical activity that can be done in a park on several pieces of paper. Examples include skateboarding, walking, biking, rollerblading, etc. Place all pieces of paper in a bag.

Divide the students into two teams. Have one kid select an activity from the bag for their team to act out. Each team will take turns acting out a park activity, while the other team has 60 seconds to guess what the acting team is doing.

Pretend Park Adventure

Target Audience (Grade)

PreK

PreK

Setting

Classroom



Length and Difficulty

20 Minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Follow the leader

Materials

“Park explorer” hat such as a safari or ranger hat, or another accessory to identify the leader



Assemble children into a single file line. Tell them to imagine they are in a wooded forest, and they will be playing follow the leader with you. Lead with a few of the following actions:

- Hiking up a mountain
- Running down a grassy hill, avoiding trees on the left and right
- Hopping over logs that fall in the way
- Splashing through a stream

Children can take turns wearing the “Park Explorer” hat and leading the group in an action.

Park Storybook

Target Audience (Grade)

Prek; K-2



Setting

Park or Classroom



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental exercise

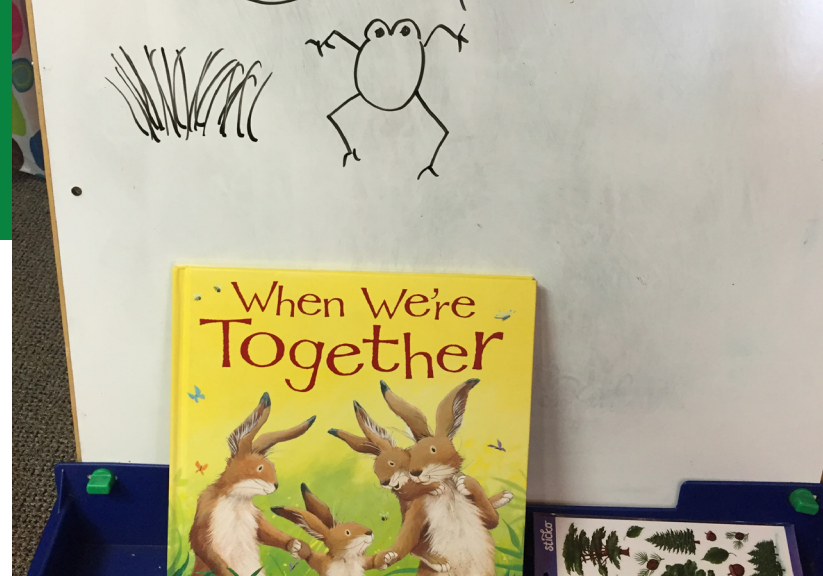


Format

Storytelling

Materials

Nature book (see Materials section, p. 29)



Engage children by asking a few of the following questions:

- Where is your favorite place to play?
- What are some of the things you do there?
- What do you like about going to the park?
- Who takes you? How do you get there?

Select a picture book related to parks or exploring nature/playing outdoors and read aloud to the group.

Pass to Ten

Target Audience (Grade)

PreK; K-2



Setting

Park or Classroom



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Follow the leader

Materials



Gather students into a circle. Explain that for the next 10 minutes they will be moving, but they will each have a chance to decide how the group moves. Choose someone to start the activity. Guide this person to do any movement they choose, such as pretending to climb rocks or play baseball. Once this person starts their activity, the rest of the group imitates the movement with their own flair. After 10 seconds, pass to the next person in the circle who then gets to choose his or her own movement.

From: commit2ten.org

Animal Decathlon

Target Audience (Grade)

PreK; K-2



Setting

Park or Classroom



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and moderate exercise



Format

Follow the leader

Materials



Choose an animal and create a sign or motion for it (such as hands on your head for a rabbit, or touching your nose for a turtle). One leader stands several yards ahead of everyone else and the kids are told to watch for the staff member to do the specific animal sign. The leader can trick the kids by doing silly signs, but when he or she does the specific sign, children can move forward by imitating it.

Tip: This is a great activity to do on a hike!

Gym Games

Target Audience (Grade)

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park



Length and Difficulty

1 hour- Strenuous exercise



Format

Game

Materials

Equipment as needed



Students will discover that they can do many of their gym class activities in the park. Select an activity that is typically done during gym class and facilitate it in a local park instead! Some of the activities may include:

- Capture the Flag
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Basketball
- Freeze Tag

Binocular Hike

Target Audience (Grade)

Prek; K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Hike, observation

Materials

Toilet paper rolls, hole punch, stapler, decorating supplies, string
Binoculars (for older students)



Binoculars can be made out of toilet paper rolls and strings. Students can personalize their own pair before going on a hike outside. Although these do not magnify, they help to focus their attention on a smaller area when they look through them. If you have access, provide older students with a real pair of binoculars.

Silent Hike

Target Audience (Grade)

PreK; K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park or Classroom



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and light physical exercise



Format

Hike, observation

Materials



Take your kids out on a hike in the park. Pull down the “curtain of silence” for a portion of the hike by having the whole group raise up their arms and lower the “curtain” together. Once lowered, everyone is quiet until the leader lifts the curtain. Encourage hikers to keep their ears and eyes open while they walk without talking. After several minutes, let everyone share something interesting they saw or heard.

Variation: Hikers can use hand signs to indicate what they observe and where. For example, if you hear or see a bird, you can point in its direction and flap your hands like wings.

Magnifying Hike

Target Audience (Grade)

K-2

K-2

Setting

Park or Classroom



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Hike, observation

Materials

Magnifying glasses



Give each student a magnifier then take them for a hike around a nearby park, greenspace, or even schoolyard! Periodically stop and give them boundaries to explore using their magnifier. Take time to let them share what they discover.

Scavenger Hunt

Target Audience (Grade)

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and light physical exercise



Format

Game, observation

Materials

Equipment as needed



Create a sheet for each student with a list of nature items to find, or use one of the scavenger hunts in the Rx folder. This can also be done verbally. Instruct the students to find a certain item (ex. 5 acorns, 2 types of seeds, or an open-ended item like “something fuzzy”). Give the students a set amount of time to find these objects. If possible, students can compare the items they found and how they are similar and different. But remember - don't move living things, and be sure to return anything that you gather for this activity. Set boundaries and expectations before the children begin searching.

Outdoor Story Map

Target Audience (Grade)

PreK; K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park



Length and Difficulty

30 minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Creative thinking, drawing

Materials

Chalk, found natural materials



Create a story map and draw it outside! This can be quickly done with chalk on a playground or you can spend longer finding sticks and other natural (but not living) found objects on the ground to create pictures to map out a story. Children can draw or create with found objects a large version of their story map and walk through the map as they retell their story. This can be done really well in small groups. After 20 minutes, each group visits each other's story maps and, if time allows, retell the story in full.

From: www.wildlearning.com

Nature Journal

Target Audience

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park or classroom



Length and Difficulty

15-30 minutes - Mental exercise



Format

Observation, writing, drawing

Materials

Paper, paper grocery bags or cereal boxes, stapler, pencils and/or crayons



Create a simple journal out of quarter- or half-sheets of blank paper. Cover with reused paper grocery bags, or cereal boxes for a sturdier cover. Kids can decorate the outside of their journal and record stories and observations from their adventures outdoors!

Contact rx@pittsburghparks.org for more resources, journaling prompts, and information about nature journaling with children.

Park Stewardship

Target Audience (Grade)

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and moderate exercise



Format

Stewardship

Materials

Equipment as needed



Our parks need your help! Improve your health and the health of the parks by joining the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy or other partner organizations for a volunteer event in a park near you.

Visit www.pittsburghparks.org/volunteer to learn more.

Find Your Tree



Target Audience (Grade)

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Game, sensory exploration

Materials

Blindfolds (1 per pair)

In a space with plenty of trees, working in pairs, one person carefully guides their blindfolded partner to a nearby tree. They are given time to explore the texture, size and features of their tree. They are then led back to the starting point and with the blindfold removed are asked to try and re-find their tree.

You may need to give your partner some hot and cold clues. Partners swap roles and repeat. If time allows, have the group share their experience, such as describing the texture of the bark and any other features of their tree.

- The leader should demonstrate with someone the safe method of leading a blindfolded partner (slowly and with a hand on wrist and elbow) and discuss potential hazards.
- There needs to be enough trees within a short distance (50 feet) from the starting point for all the group in pairs to be able to find a separate tree.

Sticks of 10

Target Audience (Grade)

PreK; K-2



Setting

Park



Length and Difficulty

20 Minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Collecting, counting

Materials

Small sticks, autumn leaves



Support children with counting in tens while exploring autumn leaves. Each child to find themselves a small stick and collect 10 autumn leaves to thread onto the stick. When each child has finished, gather the group together and count up to ten or in tens using the sticks.

From: www.wildlearning.com

From: www.wildlearning.com

“Capture” Nature

Target Audience

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park



Length and Difficulty

40-60 minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Photography

Materials

Cameras or devices with cameras



Photography is a fun way of enabling children to capture what they see and discover. Individually or in pairs, take photos of wildlife in your school grounds or nearby green space. Encourage capturing photos at different scales—from a big tree to a tiny insect. Upon return to the school or your site, try looking up what you found online or in a field guide, creating a local wildlife guide, or putting together a nature collage.

DIY Exercise Trail

Target Audience (Grade)

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park



Length and Difficulty

30 Minutes - Mental and moderate exercise



Format

Active play

Materials

Chalks, sticks or other materials



Individually or in groups, kids create a one-of-a-kind exercise trail for their peers and passersby. Use a large paved area to draw and write activity instructions, such as “hop like a frog”, “follow the paws”, or “twirl around”. Take time to try each exercise trail.

From: www.thepintrestedparent.com

Toss-n-Talk



Target Audience (Grade)

K-2; 3-5



Setting

Park or classroom



Length and Difficulty

20 Minutes - Mental and light exercise



Format

Active discussion

Materials

Beach ball, permanent marker

Inflate the beach ball and use a permanent marker to write questions about parks and the outdoors on the panels of the ball. Have the group stand in a circle and toss the ball to one person. When the person catches the ball, they answer the question closest to their right thumb. Continue as time allows or until everyone has had at least one turn to answer a question. Set ground rules for the game such as throwing gently and listening respectfully.

Sample questions:

What parks do you go to? How often?

Who do you go to the park with?

What do you like to do when you are outdoors?

What features would your dream park have?

What is your favorite wild animal/insect/flower?

Describe something in nature that makes you scared/happy/curious/etc.