

A Walk in the Woods Adventure

Materials Needed

- Comfortable walking shoes and weather-appropriate clothing for each child and the teacher
- A small tote bag or bucket for each child (their "Treasure Bag")
- A magnifying glass (optional, but fun!)
- Snacks and water for a mid-adventure break
- A blanket to sit on for story time and art
- A large sheet of paper or a piece of cardboard for each child
- Child-safe glue or a glue stick
- Chunky crayons or washable markers
- The book "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" by Michael Rosen or a similar nature-themed story

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, Oliver, Mila, and Reggie will have opportunities to:

- **Explore Nature:** Use their senses (touch, sight, hearing, smell) to observe the natural world.
- **Develop Gross Motor Skills:** Practice walking on uneven ground, balancing, and bending to pick up objects.
- **Enhance Fine Motor Skills:** Grasp and collect small items like leaves, twigs, and pinecones, and later use glue and crayons.
- **Build Vocabulary:** Learn and use words related to the woods, such as "leaf," "stick," "tree," "bumpy," "smooth," and "crunchy."
- **Express Creativity:** Create a unique piece of art using the natural treasures they collected.

Lesson Activities

Part 1: Getting Ready for Our Adventure (5 minutes)

Goal: To build excitement and set the stage for exploration.

1. Gather Oliver, Mila, and Reggie and tell them, "Today, we are going on a special adventure—a walk in the woods! We are going to be nature explorers."
2. Give each child their "Treasure Bag." Explain, "This is your special treasure bag. We are going to look for amazing nature treasures to put inside, like colorful leaves or interesting sticks!"
3. Sing a simple, active song to get ready. To the tune of "The Wheels on the Bus":
The explorers in the woods walk up and down, up and down, up and down.
The explorers in the woods walk up and down, all day long!
(Add verses like: "look all around," "listen with our ears," "sniff with our nose.")

Part 2: The Woodland Walk & Treasure Hunt (15-20 minutes)

Goal: To engage in sensory and physical exploration of the environment.

1. Begin your walk into a safe, familiar wooded area or park. As you walk, model curiosity and wonder. "Wow, look at this big, tall tree! Can you pat the bark? How does it feel? It feels bumpy to me!"
2. **The Hunt is On:** Encourage the children to find treasures for their bags. Prompt them with ideas:
 - "Can you find a crunchy, brown leaf?" (Listen to it crunch!)

- "Let's look for a smooth, grey rock." (Feel how smooth it is.)
 - "Who can find a long, skinny twig?"
 - "I see a bumpy pinecone! Let's put it in your bag."
3. **Sensory Stops:** Pause frequently to engage all the senses.
- **Listen:** "Let's be very still and quiet for a moment. What do you hear? I hear a bird singing!"
 - **Look:** Use the magnifying glass to look closely at a bug, the veins on a leaf, or the texture of bark.
 - **Smell:** "Let's smell this pinecone. It smells like a Christmas tree!"

Part 3: Nature Art Creations (10-15 minutes)

Goal: To apply their findings in a creative, hands-on project.

1. Find a comfortable spot and lay out the blanket. Have a snack and water break.
2. Ask the children to gently empty their treasure bags onto the blanket. Talk about what they found. "Oliver, you found a beautiful red leaf! Mila, look at this tiny stick you found!"
3. Give each child a large sheet of paper or cardboard. Provide the glue sticks.
4. Say, "Now we get to make a beautiful nature picture with our treasures!" Show them how to put glue on the paper and press a leaf or twig onto it.
5. Let them freely create their own collage. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Encourage them to arrange their items however they like.
6. Offer crayons or markers for them to add color to their artwork, perhaps by drawing a sun, grass, or just scribbling joyfully around their treasures.

Part 4: Forest Friends Cool-Down & Story Time (5 minutes)

Goal: To calmly conclude the lesson and reinforce the experience through story.

1. While their artwork dries, tidy up the materials.
2. Read the book "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" or another nature story. Encourage the children to join in with the repetitive phrases and motions ("swishy swashy," "stumble trip").
3. End by praising their hard work as explorers and artists. "You all did such a wonderful job finding treasures and making amazing nature art today! You are fantastic woodland explorers."

Assessment (Observational)

During the lesson, observe and take mental notes on each child's engagement:

- **Participation:** Did the child actively search for items? Were they engaged during the walk?
- **Language:** Did the child attempt to repeat words like "leaf," "stick," or "tree"? Did they use descriptive words you provided, like "bumpy" or "crunchy"?
- **Motor Skills:** Was the child able to bend and pick up objects? Could they hold and use the glue stick with some success (with or without help)?
- **Creativity:** Did the child seem to enjoy the process of creating their own artwork?

Differentiation and Inclusivity

- **For a child needing more support:** Hold their hand while walking on uneven ground. Guide their hand to touch different textures if they are hesitant. Help them hold the glue stick and press down items for their collage. Offer specific, simple prompts like, "Let's put this leaf right here."
- **For a child needing an extra challenge:** Ask more complex questions, such as "Can you

find something that is green?" or "Let's count how many pinecones are in your bag." During the art project, encourage them to tell you a story about their picture.

- **Pacing:** This lesson is flexible. If the children are fascinated by a particular spot, spend more time there. If their attention wanes, move on to the next activity or conclude early. The primary goal is joyful exploration.