

Welcome, Forest Explorer! (5 mins)

Start by asking: "Have you ever visited a place with lots of tall trees growing close together? What do you think that place is called?" Show pictures of different forests (rainforest, deciduous forest, coniferous forest). Talk briefly about how they look different but are all forests. Explain that today, we're going on an imaginary adventure to explore a forest!

What's in a Forest? (10-15 mins)

Option 1 (Nature Walk): If possible, go outside to a nearby park or backyard with trees. Collect some leaves, twigs, maybe an acorn or pinecone. Use a magnifying glass to look closely at the bark, leaves, and any tiny creatures. Talk about the shapes, textures, and colors.

Option 2 (Indoor Exploration): If staying indoors, spread out pre-collected nature items or pictures of them. Talk about trees being the most important part of a forest. Discuss roots (underground), trunk (the tall middle part), branches (arms), and leaves/needles. Have the student draw a big tree on paper, labeling the parts together.

Forest Friends (10 mins)

Show pictures or use toy animals of creatures that live in forests (bear, deer, squirrel, owl, fox, rabbit). Ask: "What animals do you think live here among all these trees?" Discuss what the animals might eat or where they sleep in the forest (e.g., squirrels in tree holes, bears in dens, birds in nests). Make animal sounds together!

Create a Forest Habitat (15-20 mins)

Give the student construction paper. They can draw or cut out and glue brown paper trunks and green paper tops to make trees. Then, they can add their collected nature items (leaves, twigs) or draw/cut out forest animals to live in their forest scene. Alternatively, use playdough to sculpt trees and animals.

Forest Wrap-up (5 mins)

Look at the student's forest creation. Ask them to point to a tree and name an animal living in their forest. Review: "What is a forest? (A place with many trees). What lives in a forest? (Trees, plants, animals). Why is a forest important? (It's a home!)." Finish by reading a simple picture book about forests or singing a song like "The Green Grass Grew All Around."

Extension Ideas:

- Build a forest floor sensory bin: Fill a shallow tub with soil/brown rice, add twigs, leaves, pinecones, and toy animals.
- Do leaf rubbings: Place leaves under paper and rub the side of a crayon over them.
- Forest snack: Pretzel sticks (twigs), broccoli florets (treetops), gummy bears (animals).