



Ideas for Families : Nature Journal Prompts

Need some ideas for engaging your children away from screens and out learning and exploring in nature (could be backyard, front stoop, or even out a window)?

Early spring is a great time to start a nature journal – maybe the best!

Materials: Paper and a sharp pencil with eraser! That's really all you need. You might also want a clipboard (a flattened cereal box and a binder clip), crayons or colored pencils. Later you can three-hole punch each day's work and fill a binder.

Here are a few suggestions from Four Winds of things we all love to observe and think about while outside in the springtime. Sometimes it's easiest to take the walk first, gather your finds, and make the notes or drawings when you get back home. OR it's fun to find a sit spot to return to each day. The kids will have ideas too, and it's always an adventure to let them lead the learning.

- Trees and shrubs as they grow leaves and flowers. Tag some lower branches with a bit of yarn and make daily visits. Draw what you see.
- Spring flowers. They're everywhere – what blooms first? You don't have to know the name of a plant to draw and color it in your journal. Count the petals and other parts. Want help with plant identification?:
<https://www.inaturalist.org/> or <https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/>
- Record the weather each day! Color your page the same color as the sky. Draw the clouds by outlining their shapes with the sky color.
<https://cloudatlas.wmo.int/cloud-identification-guide.html>
- Birds get busy: get outside as early as you can, and listen and watch. Make a list of all the things you notice them doing: Flying? Perching? Eating? Preening? Singing? Chickadees are fun to draw – two circles and a beak.
- Make a map of your yard or neighborhood. Put in the things that are important to you: your house, your favorite tree, a hiding spot...



- Write poems about a tree or a river or a flower in the shape of that subject.
- What does sunrise look like from your yard? Sunset? You can make a little drawing of your horizon.
- Are there spiders yet? Some spiders live through the winter, and are just waiting for the flies to appear. They're fun to draw – count those legs!
- If you sit in your favorite spot, make a drawing of what you can see there – the view, the nearest tree, what you see around your feet.
- Start a plant from a seed. A bean from the kitchen or a sunflower seed from the bird seed bag is really fun to watch. Draw it in your journal, and measure its height daily or every other day.
- Rainy Day? Draw a pattern --- dots, stripes, squiggles – with water-based markers on a coffee filter. Leave white spaces between them. Put it out in the rain and watch what happens.
- Write a story or a poem about raindrops.
(<https://www.edhacked.com/poem-waiting-at-the-window-by-a-a-milne/>)
- Take a question ramble: observe some natural object closely and then spend 5 minutes just writing all of the questions you can come up with that are in any way related to that object.
- Look for and draw the flowers on a maple tree, an oak tree, an apple tree.
- Share your nature journal entries with Four Winds by taking a photo and sharing online, tagging #fwni, #nearbynature, #thenatureprogram, #fourwinds,

