



Structuring an Outdoor Lesson

Set up the Question

Clearly define the purpose of going outdoors and the question students will be investigating.

Give Students a Clear Task

Having a concrete task helps students focus their observations, and their thinking.

Ask Students to Predict What They Will Find

Ask students what they already know that could help them with their investigation. Where will they look and why? What characteristics or behavior do they think they will see?

Model Outdoors What You Want Students to Do

Once outside, model the proper use of tools, handling of live organisms, and respectful behavior in a natural environment. Ask questions that will help students focus on the kinds of observations you want them to make.

Check-in With Students While They Work

Circulate, or bring the group back together, to help students interpret what they are, or are *not*, finding. Do new questions arise?

Give Students Time to Explore

Give students *time* to —sometimes playfully— experiment with, and explore, the phenomena they are investigating. For many students the experience of being outdoors itself will be new and unfamiliar. Outdoors, students may move about more, touch more, use louder or more excited voices or larger body movements.



Record Observations Outdoors

Allow time for students to take “field notes” outdoors, using words, pictures or numbers to record their observations. A more extended reflection or data analysis is often more productive indoors.

Connect Outdoor Observations to Class Investigations

Back indoors discuss what students found and how it confirms or challenges what the class has been studying.

Display Outdoor for Future Reference

Collect class data on a chart; begin a terrarium, or a collection of stones, seeds, or soil; or post sample notebook pages. Compare the observations made outdoors with the results of classroom investigations, reading, print or on-line research, and later outdoor observations.