

SENSE NATURE

Summary: An outdoor activity where the Scouts use their five senses to explore and connect with nature.

Aim: To experience and connect with nature using all of the senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching) and understand how the information from our senses combine to create our awareness of the natural world.

Equipment: Blindfolds, paper, pens

Preparation: Find a suitable place to visit

Duration: One hour

Setting: A local natural area, for example, forest, beach, mountain or park

Age Range: Under 11



LARCH HILL

INTERNATIONAL SCOUT CENTRE

eco adventure

Aim

Scouts are working towards a world where sufficient natural habitat exists to support native species.

Educational objectives

Explore a local natural area. Discover some of the local native species of plants and animals and their habitat needs. Demonstrate knowledge of some contrasting natural habitats.

Background

Nature can be appreciated using all of our senses. The sense we use the most often to understand our environment is sight but in actual fact we are using our other senses at the same time to help build up the picture of what is around us. By concentrating individually on each of our senses we can gain a better awareness of our local environment.

Step by step guide to activity

1. Find a suitable local natural area and take the group there.
2. Ask the group to name the five senses and discuss how we use these in our daily lives. How do our senses help us to understand our surroundings?
3. Explain to the group that they are going to explore the natural environment around them using each of the senses individually. Which senses do they use the most? Which senses do they think will tell them the most and the least?
4. Do the following activities. Each activity will identify different features of the natural environment you are exploring. Write down these features as the activities progress. The final activity ends by summing up how our senses have painted a picture of the local environment.

Activity 1 – Scavenger Hunt**Sense: Sight**

1. Split the Scouts into teams and ask them to find ten objects that have something in common. For example, ten natural objects that are soft. Other ideas are objects that are hard, green, brown, dead, man made etc.
2. Each group could have the same category or one group could have to find soft objects and the other group hard objects.
3. The Scouts should take care not to harm or disturb living creatures.
4. Once they have found their objects they present them to the rest of the group.
5. Have a discussion about what they have found. Some ideas for questions are given below.
6. After the discussion put the natural objects back appropriately. If a group has collected man made objects, make sure these are taken away with you and disposed of correctly.

How many different natural objects have they found overall?

Were the group surprised by the number of different things they have found?

What is the most surprising thing collected?

How much man made material was found?

Where did they look for the objects?

How well do these objects represent what is living in the natural area?

Was this activity easy?

It depended on our sense of sight. How useful is our sight?

How important is sight to our awareness and understanding of nature?

Activity 2 – Barefoot Walk**Sense: Touch**

1. Split the group into pairs and choose one of the pair to go first.
2. The Scout going first takes off their shoes and socks and puts on a blindfold.
3. The blindfolded Scout is then led over a course by their partner.
4. As they walk the blindfolded Scout must concentrate on what their feet can feel. They must describe to their partner what the ground feels like on their feet and try to identify what they are walking over. The path should be safe from sharp or dangerous objects and should include different textures and surfaces.
5. The pair then swaps roles and repeats the activity.
6. Gather the group together and discuss the activity. Some ideas for discussion are given below:

What did the ground feel like?

Was it soft, hard, warm, cold, wet, dry etc?

Try thinking of really imaginative words to describe how the ground felt.

What were you walking over?

How sensitive are your feet?

Are they more, the same, or less sensitive than your hands?

Did you use your sense of hearing to help you identify what you were walking on? (for example, if walking through leaves or through mud or water)

How did being blindfolded make you feel?

Activity 3 – Find Your Tree**Sense: Touch**

1. Introduce this activity by looking at and discussing the trees in your surroundings. Ask the Scouts what the distinctive features of the trees are and visit several trees to see their differences and similarities.
2. Split the group into pairs and blindfold one of the pair.
3. The blindfolded Scout is spun around and then guided carefully to a tree. This is best done in silence.
4. They must touch the tree to discover its size, shape and texture. They need to learn enough about the tree to be able to identify it without their blindfold on. Good things to feel for are distinctive patterns in the bark, branches coming from the trunk, roots or plants at the base of the tree. An excellent way to identify your tree is to know its diameter. Get the Scouts to wrap their arms around the tree to work this out.
5. They are then taken away from the tree, spun around again and their blindfold taken off. They must use their memory of what the tree felt like to find it.
6. The pair then swaps over and repeats the activity.
7. Gather the group together and discuss the activity. Some ideas for discussion are given below:

How easy was it to find your tree?

What features of your tree helped you to find it?

As you touched the tree, how easy was it to imagine what it looked like?

How sensitive are your fingers?

What features of the tree could they feel (for example, different textures, different temperatures, dampness, dryness)?

If you have done the barefoot walk activity, are your fingers more sensitive than your feet?

How does touching the tree compare with just looking at the tree?

What did you learn about the tree from touching it that you wouldn't learn from looking at it?

Activity 4 – What do you hear?**Sense: Hearing**

1. Ask each Scout to find a comfortable place to sit.
2. The group must sit quietly for five minutes and listen to the sounds around them. When they hear a sound, they must think about what has made it and remember it.
3. After five minutes, ask the group what they heard and discuss the sounds. Some ideas for questions are given below.

What sounds did they hear?

Were they natural or man made sounds?

Were they surprised at how much/ how little noise there was?

Did they hear any sounds they had never heard before, if so, what?

How did the sounds help them to understand what is surrounding them?

Activity 5 – Nature Smells**Sense: Smell**

1. Sit the group down and ask them to shut their eyes and sit quietly for a few minutes and concentrate on what they can smell around them.
2. After a few minutes have a group discussion on the different smells in their surroundings. The results of this discussion are very dependent on the natural area, the time of year, the weather and even the time of day. Ask the Scouts to identify any smells. Where are they coming from? Do they like the smells? How do the smells make them feel?
3. Ask the Scouts to explore the natural area and smell as many natural things as possible to find their favorite smell. Explain that they can rub things with their fingers to generate a smell. The smell might then be passed onto their fingers.
4. Once they have found their favourite smell, ask each Scout to present their object and its smell to the whole group. Have a discussion about the natural smells. Some ideas for questions are given on the next page.

Can they describe why they like their favourite smell?

Does their favourite smell remind them of anything?

Did they find any smells they didn't like?

Were the smells of the natural place what they expected?

Does nature have its own smell?

How do they think the animals that live here use the smells around them?

If they couldn't see, how would their sense of smell help them to picture their surroundings?

Activity 6 – Natures Larder

Sense: Taste

1. Save this activity until the end.
2. Ask the group to name all the different things that make up the natural environment surrounding them. Which of these things could they eat? What would the different tastes be? What does something taste like that is bad for us? Which other senses could we use to help us decide not to eat something?
3. If there are any edible plants in your local natural environment that can be picked without harming the local ecosystem then allow the Scouts to taste these.
4. Ask each Scout to choose an animal that lives in the surrounding environment. They must tell the rest of the group what that animal eats. Do they think animals have taste buds? How do animals use their sense of taste? How does their animal decide what is good to eat and what is bad to eat?

Evaluation

1. Gather the group together and discuss their experiences exploring nature using each of their senses. Some ideas for questions are given below.

Which sense gives you the most information about your surroundings?

Which sense gives you the least?

How do the senses work together to give you information?

What natural things have you discovered today?

How do the living things in this environment use their different senses?

What is your favourite thing in this natural environment?

Further activities

1. Create a poster or display showing all the different features of your local natural environment
2. Learn about the difference between native and non native species and find out about them in your local area.
3. Explore different natural habitats in your local area and other places or learn about them from local experts, books, films or the internet.
4. Encourage the Scouts to practice their sensory skills simultaneously by themselves in their own time.
5. Encourage Scouts to keep their own nature journal where they can record their observations with different senses.