

At-Home Guided Learning Plan *featuring the* Trees Study

Trees Study—Investigation 1: What are the characteristics of the trees in our community?

Over the next several days, you and your child will investigate the question "What are the characteristics of the trees in our community?" As you find the answer to this question together, your child will observe and describe a variety trees in your community and learn about their leaves, trunks, branches, and roots.

This plan includes hands-on activities in which your child will closely observe the characteristics of trees and learn how to

- measure and compare the size of tree trunks,
- examine tree leaves and create leaf rubbings,
- draw and label the different parts of a tree, and
- determine whether a tree is deciduous.

Each day of the *Guided Learning Plan* includes the following:

Study Concepts
This study-related activity offers guidance for helping your family explore the topic, investigate questions about it, or celebrate your learning together through hands-on discovery. You'll also find a question here to help you effectively share your child's learning and discoveries with your teacher.

Guided Learning Experience
Here you'll find a suggested 10- to 15-minute activity that's more focused on supporting a specific skill—which is listed next to the title of the activity—in your child's development. You'll also find a question to help you effectively share your child's learning and discoveries with your teacher.

Mighty Minutes®
Use these short chants, games, and rhymes to playfully engage with your child at any time of day!

"Something to Consider" Tips
Reflect on positive guidance and developmental tips and strategies from experts in the field of early childhood.

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Investigation 1: Day 1

What are the characteristics of the trees in our community?

Tree Trunks

- Gather yarn, twine, or string and a pair of scissors. Take your child outside with the supplies to find two trees with different-sized trunks. Support them to point out the trees' trunks and predict which trunk is bigger around.
- Explain to your child that together you will use string or yarn to measure the trunks' *circumference* or how big it is around.
- Support your child to wrap a piece of string around each of the trees and cut the string where the two ends meet.
- After both trees' trunks have been measured, take time to compare the two string lengths and talk about which tree trunk is the biggest around: *Lars, you noticed the yarn from the first tree is longer than the yarn from the second tree. That means the first tree trunk is bigger around.*

How did your child compare the two lengths of string to determine the tree trunks' sizes?

Guided Learning Experience

I'm Thinking of a Shape—*Understands Shapes*

- Ask your child to help you gather clean recyclables of different sizes and shapes, such as cans, oatmeal cartons, spools, paper towel tubes, boxes, balls, cones, and cups.
- Introduce your child to the shape names and talk about their attributes. You might say, *This empty tissue box has a side that is long and looks like a rectangle. This oatmeal can is a cylinder, and the bottom is like a circle.*
- As you explore with your child, use words like *points*, *edges*, *corners*, and *faces* when talking about each shape.
- Show your child a few shapes and ask her to find the shape you describe. You might say, *This shape is round like a ball. Yes, it's the sphere!*

What shapes did your child identify and describe?

Mighty Minutes®

Mr. Forgetful—*Shows awareness of smaller sounds in language*

1. Develop a list of compound words with your child, e.g., *baseball*, *sunshine*, *rainbow*, etc.

2. Tell the following story.

   Once upon a time, there was a very forgetful man. He forgot everything: where he placed his keys, whether he brushed his teeth, and where he parked his car. Some people called him Mr. Forgetful. Sometimes Mr. Forgetful would forget to say the end of a word. Instead of saying *football*, he would just say *foot*.

3. Ask your child to guess how Mr. Forgetful might say each word on your list. Invite your child to create silly compound words with you.



Something to Consider

As you prepare your child for kindergarten, you might ask yourself *How can I teach my child math in fun and engaging ways?* Math does not only take place at your child's school: it can be easily incorporated into everyday experiences. For example, try counting the number of socks you have as you do the laundry with your child or comparing the sizes of cups at the kitchen table. All of these experiences support your child's mathematical thinking skills.

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Investigation 1: Day 2

What are the characteristics of the trees in our community?

Leaves

- Show your child a collection of leaves, paper, crayons with the outside paper torn off, and tape.
- Talk about the leaf collection. Point out the veins, blades (flat main part of the leaf), lobes (rounded, separate section of a leaf), and tips: *Look, Fernando, that leaf has pointy tips! Let's count how many tips it has.*
- Support your child to choose a leaf, tape it to the table, tape a sheet of paper over the leaf, and use the side of the crayons to create leaf rubbings.
- Encourage your child to notice the details of the leaf in the rubbing and compare it with the original leaf: *Look, I see a long vein in the middle of your leaf rubbing. What does that look like on the real leaf?*

What tree parts did your child remember? What new parts did you introduce?

Guided Learning Experience

Alphabet Books—*Identifies and names letters*

- Choose an alphabet book that features one letter with appealing illustrations on each page, such as *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr., *Build it A to Z* by Trish Holland, and *Gathering the Sun* by Alma Flor Ada.
- Before you read the book with your child, talk about the letters and words on the cover page: *Let's look at the letters in the title. Here is a curved letter. It's a* C.
- Read the book one time through to familiarize your child with the letters and illustrations on each page. Then read it again. As you do, pause to point out letters. Invite your child to look for specific letters on each page. Talk about the features of the letters they find. For example, you might say, *This letter looks like a circle. It's an* O.

What letters was your child able to recognize?

Mighty Minutes®

Feely Box—*Understands the physical properties of objects*

1. Place an item in a box or bag.
2. Ask your child to reach inside the box, feel the item, and describe it.
3. Invite her to use descriptive terms, e.g., *smooth* and *cold*.
4. Ask her to guess what the item is and then pull it out to examine it.



Something to Consider

As your child begins to learn the letters in the alphabet, you might notice that the first letter of their first name is the most important letter of all. Encourage them to find "their" letter on packages, signs in your neighborhood, or keyboards. Expand on their interest by looking for other letters in their name or letters in family members' names. Learning to notice "their" letters helps children make connections to the letter sounds they hear and the letters they see!

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Investigation 1: Day 3

What are the characteristics of the trees in our community?

Tree Parts

- Explain to your child that you will draw a picture of a tree together. If possible, print out a photo of a tree to refer to.
- Invite your child to explain what parts of the tree you will need to draw. Write the parts she names on a sheet of paper: *You said a tree will need a big trunk. I am going to write the word* trunk *on the paper.*
- Draw and label the different tree parts from the list. When finished, introduce any additional parts that your child did not name. For example, you might say, *Our tree needs roots. Roots are what provide the tree with food and water. Let's draw them together!*
- Save the drawing to refer to later in the study.

What tree parts did your child remember? What new parts did you introduce?

Guided Learning Experience

Sorting & Classifying—*Understands quantities*

- Show your child materials containers or a muffin tin and items to sort, such as different colored blocks, toy cars, silverware, or crayons. Ask your child to describe the objects: *How are these things alike? How are they different?*
- Ask your child to sort the objects by color, size, shape, or another characteristic.
- Ask questions once the objects are sorted: *How are the objects in this box the same? In this group, which object is the smallest? Which group has more?*

How did your child make comparisons between the quantities in each group?

Mighty Minutes®

Riddle Dee Dee—*Rhymes*

1. Chant the following rhyme and keep the beat.

   Riddle dee dee, riddle dee dee.
   Can you make a rhyme with me?
   I say [ball], you say [fall].
   [Ball], [fall], [mall], [tall].

2. Provide the first two rhyming words and invite your child to continue making rhymes for that word.

3. Repeat with a new word, e.g., *cat*, *boy*, *pan*, *tap*.

4. Give your child an opportunity to say a word that rhymes.

Something to Consider

Consider implementing a "bedtime chat routine" as you put your child to bed. Think of some questions you'd like to ask your child. For example, you might ask him about his favorite part of the day, something he is looking forward to tomorrow, something he learned today, and something he wants to learn tomorrow. The goal of these questions is to help your child relax, connect with you, and enjoy chatting with you.

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Investigation 1: Day 4

What are the characteristics of the trees in our community?

Trees That Lose Leaves

- Take your child outside. Invite him to collect leaves that he finds on the ground.
- Support your child to find the tree the leaves he collected fell from. When you find the tree, introduce the term *deciduous*. Explain that deciduous trees lose their leaves throughout the year: *The leaf in your hand came from that oak tree right over there. Did you know that oak trees are deciduous? That means they lose their leaves throughout the year.*
- If your child is interested, continue collecting leaves from the ground and finding the deciduous trees they fell from.

How was your child able to determine which tree the leaves he collected belonged to?

Guided Learning Experience

Patterns—*Recognizes and understands patterns*

- Walk around your home and show your child a few examples of common patterns, e.g., stripes on a shirt or repeated colors on wall tiles or on blankets. You might say, *Look at the stripes on your sister's shirt—red, white, red, white, red, white. That's a pattern!*
- Offer your child a group of objects in two colors, e.g., red and blue cars, green and black blocks, or blue and white socks, and explain that he will create his own colored pattern. Support your child as he creates it: *Here are black and yellow crayons. Can you make a pattern like the bumblebee toy we saw on your bed? Black, yellow, black, yellow, black, yellow. What color comes next?*

How was your child able to recognize and create patterns?

Mighty Minutes®

Ticky Ricky—*Rhymes*

1. Collect a few items that your child can name.
2. Snap, tap, or clap as you chant the rhyme:

   Ticky ricky, tacky racky,
   Chicky chacky choo.
   I like finding words that rhyme.
   How about you?

3. Ask your child to select an object, name it, and say a word that rhymes with it.
4. Repeat the song together and find rhyming words for the remaining items.



Something to Consider

Some children struggle with getting their arms into a coat. Have your child place her unzipped or unbuttoned coat on the floor with the inside of the coat facing up and its sleeves spread wide. Have her stand near the collar or top of the coat, lean over, slip her arms into the sleeves, and pull the coat over her head. Voila! Her coat is on!

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Investigation 1: Day 5

What are the characteristics of the trees in our community?

Sharing Tree Photos

- Send a picture of the tree drawing from Day 3 to a friend or family member and take a few minutes to call or video chat with them.
- Encourage your child to share the parts of the tree labeled in the picture: *Do you want to tell Nana what the part growing under the tree is called?*
- If possible, ask your family member or friend to take or send a photo of any trees she has outside her home to share with your child.

What did your child share about his picture with a friend or family member?

Guided Learning Experience

Stick Letters—*Identifies and names letters*

- Gather a collection of craft sticks, toothpicks, chopsticks, or small branches from a neighborhood walk. Explain that you will work together and use the sticks to make letters. Show your child how to make a letter with the sticks.
- Talk about the letters that are made with only straight lines. Write or show letters for reference. *Let's say the alphabet together and think about the shape of each letter.*
- Discuss the difference between forming upper- and lowercase letters. *Names always start with uppercase letters. See how big they are compared to the lowercase letters?*

What letters did your child create using sticks?

Mighty Minutes®

Come Play With Me—*Counts*

1. Show your child a variety of stuffed animals or dolls. Place one stuffed animal at the top of a "tree," e.g., on a shelf or counter.

2. Read the following poem to your child.

   One little animal climbing in a tree,
   Playing by herself, but she didn't want to be.
   So she called for a friend, over land and sea: *[Bunny], come play with me.*
   And along came [Bunny] to climb in her tree.

3. Invite your child to choose the animal that is called and help it pretend to climb a tree.

4. Ask your child to decide which animal to call next.

5. Count the animals "in the tree" after each verse. Say, *Two little animals climbing in a tree…*



Something to Consider

Sharing work with others gives your child the opportunity to express himself and be proud of what he has accomplished. As your child shares the tree drawing you created together, observe which parts of the tree he is able to remember. This provides the opportunity for you to see what your child has learned throughout the study and what concepts he might need more help with.

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