



ZOOFARI 2025

NATURE CRAFT PACK

Janel Kempf, *Learning & Innovation*

SIT SPOT

The natural world provides so much for us. At a base level, frankly, it provides everything for us—food, water, shelter, even the air we breathe. But the human-created world can add a lot of stress to our lives. To manage that stress, or at least its effects on us, we should all consider incorporating more of what gives us our basic needs. We need more nature.

Research has shown clearly that exposure to nature improves our mental and physical health, and that of our children. Children who spend time in nature regularly are healthier, less stressed, get better grades, and more.

There are many ways to add more nature to our lives. One easy way is to do a nature journaling activity called a Sit Spot. This activity is a great reintroduction to the natural world that's all around you, but that you may have stopped noticing in your busy life. And it doesn't require much in the way of materials or time, either. Give it a try!

YOU'LL NEED:

- **A place in nature to sit:** You won't need to go far, because nature is all around us! You can sit in the forest or on the beach if you have access to a place like that, but your front step, local park, or if you can't get fully outside, next to an open window will do nicely. Do make sure the spot is safe—no nettles or poison ivy, no hazardous litter, etc.
- **A sketchbook or blank journal:** You can use one with blank, lined, dotted, or graph paper pages.
- **Something to write and/or draw with:** Just a pencil is great! If you want to add colored pencils, markers, crayons, or even watercolor paints, feel free.
- **Something to sit on (optional):** If it's wet or cold outside, you might find you're able to concentrate better while sitting on something waterproof or insulated—or you might want to fully experience the cold and damp by sitting directly on it!



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SIT SPOT *(continued)*

HOW TO:

- **Carrying your journal and writing tools with you, go to your place to experience nature.** Since nature is everywhere, your sit spot can be nearly anywhere other than fully indoors, as long as it's safe and you can feel comfortable staying there and using your senses.
- **Sit down.** You'll be there for several minutes, so make yourself comfortable.
- **Get ready to use all your senses.** The following is a good order to think through what you're experiencing. Go slowly, allowing some silence between senses. That will give you or the person you're guiding a chance to have a different experience than we usually do in our rushed world. Say something like the following to yourself silently, or in a calm, gentle voice to the person you're guiding:
 - Close your eyes. Feel the air around you... is there a breeze? How warm or cool is the air?
Can you feel the sun on your skin?
 - Take a deep breath in through your nose, then blow it gently out through your mouth.
Do that again, but this time notice the scents on the air. What do you smell?
 - Shift your attention to listening. What can you hear? Are there both quiet sounds and loud sounds?
What's the quietest sound you can hear? Are there sounds made by people and sounds made by nature?
 - Put your hands gently down on the ground next to you. What does the ground feel like?
Are there loose items you can pick up individually? What do they feel like?
 - Gently open your eyes. Wait a few moments to let your eyes adjust to the light. Look around you.
What's the furthest-away thing you can see? Gradually bring your focus closer to you, looking at things along the way. Finally, look down and around you at the things closest to you. How much detail can you see?
 - Remain sitting for a few moments, letting your attention wander among your senses.
What captures your attention the most?
 - When you're ready, either stand up and move from your spot,
or do the following right where your sit spot is:
- **Pick up your journal and write or draw what you experienced.** It's traditional to note the date, time, and weather on your page, but beyond that everyone has a different style when nature journaling. You can go for all text, all drawings, or anywhere in between. If you're journaling with very young children, it's fun to ask the child what they drew, and jot down what they say on their pages! You can focus your journaling anywhere you want—the overall experience, what you discovered through one particular sense, one item you noticed, or any combination of those.
- **Extension: Use your sit spot regularly.** If you make a habit of sitting and journaling in the same spot at the same time daily or weekly, you'll form a connection to that small corner of the world. You'll discover the cycle of changes that nature goes through, noticing different things every time.



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HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

There is wildlife everywhere, at every moment. We just don't always see it.

And that's just fine in the eyes of those wild animals! Whether an animal is a hunter or the hunted, staying alive may mean not being seen. But they also need to get out there in the open to get their basic needs met. What to do?

Staying invisible through the wonder of camouflage is the adaptive answer to that question for a wide range of animal species. From snow leopards to thorn bugs, animals have body-covering adaptations that can allow them to hide in plain sight in their habitats—and live to see another day!

Try your hand at doing what comes naturally to so many other species. You'll pick a habitat, invent and build an imaginary critter who's camouflaged there, then challenge friends and family to find it. And if your critter is discovered quickly, don't worry. Maybe they have other strategies to stay safe, like poisonous skin or sharp claws! Just...don't try those at home.

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YOU'LL NEED:

- **A “habitat” for your handcrafted critter:** Somewhere outdoors shows you what real-life camouflaged animals are up against. But for a rainy-day activity, you can also make critters to camouflage inside your home!
- **Assorted camouflage-friendly craft supplies:** The exact items you'll need will vary according to where your habitat is, because you'll need supplies that will allow your critters to camouflage—neon colors of construction paper won't be much use in a natural space, but if you're camouflaging in the brightly-painted lobby of a community center, that might be just what you need! Depending on your space, consider an assortment of colored paper, fabric scraps, cardboard, paint and markers, nature items such as sticks, leaves and cones, etc.
- **Supplies to hold the critters together:** These will vary by what your camouflage supplies are, but you'll need some assortment of tape, glue, paper clips, a stapler, twist ties, etc.





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HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT *(continued)*

HOW TO:

- **Search for examples of camouflaged animals for inspiration.** Either online or at your library, search for pictures of camouflaged animals, and admire all the different ways animals can hide in plain sight. Need ideas? Try searching for hard-to-find friends like the flower mantis, leafy sea dragon, Vietnamese mossy frog, and the great grey owl.
- **Look around your habitat.** Think about good surfaces to hide on. A rock face? A leafy—or very non-leafy—branch? The bark of a tree?
- **Invent an animal.** It doesn't have to be a model of a real animal (though, of course, it can be). Use nature materials, craft supplies, or both to create an animal that can blend in.
- **Take the challenge.** The real test of camouflage is how well it works! Place your animal in its environment, then ask a friend or family member to find it. Remember, the challenge is camouflage, so no placing the animal out of view. A leaf-camo animal, for example, should be on top of or slightly among leaves, not hidden under them. Did your friend find it fast? Modify your critter and try again!





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WOVEN FROM NATURE

Children need a rich creative life in order to thrive. They enjoy playing with paint, blocks, strips of tree bark... wait—tree bark is creative?

Yes, absolutely! Natural objects are far richer, more complex items for creative play than human-made objects can ever be. They have complex structures, interesting smells, pieces in which no two are ever the same, and more.

Another advantage of natural objects for creative play is that they don't end up in the permanent waste stream. Many toys and art materials for children are made of plastics or forever chemicals. And we'd all be better off if those things didn't follow us into the future.

This biodegradable art project is great for developing creativity and fine motor skills. You can admire it for a while, maybe take a photo for posterity, then toss it in the compost to eventually provide nutrients to grow more natural play items.



YOU'LL NEED:

- **A piece of biodegradable cardboard:** This will be the base of your weaving. Corrugated or other heavier cardboard works better than thinner paperboard, but avoid plastic-coated cardboard. Any size you want is fine, but somewhere in the range of 8x10 inches is easy to hold and not overwhelming for younger children.
- **Jute or other biodegradable twine:** Provides a solid structure to hold your nature materials.
- **Scissors:** To make notches in the cardboard to hold the twine.
- **Nature materials for weaving:** There are lots of options, though things like pebbles won't work here. Consider gathering grasses, sticks, flowers with at least a bit of stem, strips of bark and other long narrow items.

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WOVEN FROM NATURE *(continued)*

HOW TO:

- **Make notches in the cardboard to hold your twine.**
Somewhere between half an inch to an inch apart works well.
- **Add your twine.** Tie a knot in the end of the twine so it will catch. Wrap the twine around and around the cardboard to form taut lines, tying it off at the end.
- **Weave in your nature materials.** There are many ways to weave you can try. From a simple in-and-out on every run, to forming a pattern by skipping over the twine occasionally, to creating a picture by weaving different materials into only certain areas, the only limit is your imagination!
- **Display your piece proudly!** How long your weaving lasts will depend on the nature items you choose. But one of the lovely things about nature weaving is that when you're finished admiring it, it can go in the yard waste rather than entering the landfill waste stream.

