

# Environmental Education Methods for Children and Youth



**How to inspire children and youth for nature?**

A project of

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Erasmus+

## INTRO

***This brochure is based on a Serbian - German Training that took place near Kragujevac/Serbia from the 16 to 26 of August 2018.***

*It was organized by the mountaineering association "Žeželj" from Kragujevac and the environmental youth-organization JANUN e.V. from Hannover.*

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*This brochure would like to motivate you to take children and youth into nature. It shows you a lot of methods how you can spend time in nature in an interesting, funny and educating way. Because most important is:*

*Don't be bored while being in nature.*

*The overall goal is to make kids and teenager more interested in nature through different interactive and funny activities.*

*We all know that young people spend a lot of time in the house today by the television, computer and phone. We believe it is good for them to spend more time in nature.*

***Let's take them outside!***



## You plan to take a group of children or maybe your own child to nature?

### We have good news for you: Children love nature

Really, it is true! Also it often does not look like it.

If you ask a child while watching TV, "do you want to come with me to the forest, it will probably say "no, not really".

It is often not easy to get them into the nature, but if they are there, they usually enjoy it a lot and it might be difficult also to get them out of nature.

(The following probably surprising numbers are the result of a scientific research, done in Germany)

80 % of all asked children in Germany like to spend time in nature

For 83 % of all asked children it is relaxing to be in the nature

62 % of the children even think that nature is the best place to be at, if you would like to relax.

And 42 % of the children think nature is the best place to be at, if you would like to think about something important.

This results show us, it is not just a goal to go with kids into nature because you want to make them more motivated to protect the environment and to inform them more about nature. Time in nature is good for your health and soul, to get a rest from hectic, noise and a sensory overload.

A good question is: Why is it so relaxing to be in nature?

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche found already a long time ago a good answer:

**“We like to be in nature so much - because nature does not have any opinion about us.”**

If you enter your school-class, if you meet friends, if you come home, people make up their mind about you, how you are dressed, how you might feel etc.

If you walk into a forest, no tree pays attention to you! You can feel free. You can behave as you want and nobody cares. Try to behave silly in a bus or school-class. You will understand the difference.

There is a second probably more important reason:

Psychologists say. “People wish to have changes in their life. They do not like to get bored. They do not like to listen to the same song again and again. And they do not like it when each weekend is like the others. On the other side if everything always changes it is stressful. That why we also need routine in our life to feel good.

These are opposite wishes.

A combination of both at the same time would be perfect for us.

Nature gives us the opportunity to have both at the same time. That why it is so relaxing to be in nature. How does nature do this?

Have a look at this tree. It is the always same tree and each time it looks different.





If you go there again and again, because it is maybe your favorite tree. It is always the same tree but each time you will experience something different. One time it is windy and you can hear the leaves rustle, or maybe a bird is singing, or the leaves changed their color since your last visit. Each time you will experience something different under the **same** tree. This combination is what relaxes us in nature.

Some other thinkers even believe time in nature makes better persons out of us:

The old philosopher Emanuel Kant, born 1724, even wrote down: „By absorption into nature the development of the moral of human beings can be raised.”

A little easier to understand is, what the Dakota-Indian Luther Standing Bear (1868 – 1939) said: “The old Dakota knew that the heart of a person, who lost the connection to nature, will become harsh. They knew, that people who are losing respect for everything that is alive and everything that grows, will also lose respect to people / human beings. That why the influence of nature, which made young people tactful, is part of our education.”



## More important than to know the nature is to love nature.



Often both is combined. If I know more about the fascination of nature the chance is bigger also to love nature. Children don't know the nature as good any more as it used to be. An example from Germany:

Nearly all children find birds very interesting or at least interesting. But they do not know too much about them. 10 year old children in Germany know in average 2-4 different kinds of birds by name. Just 1 % of all ten year old kids in average can identify the ten most frequently bird-species.

Just one third of all kids in the age from 12 – 15 in Germany had ever a butterfly or a beetle crawling on his hand. Just one fourth of kids of the same age saw ever a deer in the nature.

The same kids spend in Germany in average four and a half hours per day in front of a TV, Computer or with their smartphone.

## How to create a good program, if you plan to go with a group of people to nature?

If you create a program for people, especially children, imagine your workshop like a movie. Also your activity in nature needs a dramaturgy. It needs highlights, relaxing and thoughtful moments and finally a happy end. Maybe the following structure is interesting for you.



### Stage 1: Awaken Enthusiasm by your participants

- through a game
- a story
- a surprising beginning of the activity

### Stage 2: Focus Attention & getting into the topic

To the area where we are at or/and the topic

- games
- a story
- a meditation
- focusing on something and connecting it to a story

- a song
- a poem

### Stage 3: Direct Experience

Don't talk too much; don't try to explain too much in before.

Make it possible that the participants do have a direct experience in and with nature.

Try to arrange the activities that way so that the participants...

- know what to do
- are getting surprised
- are becoming active by them self
- are becoming creative
- are from time to time team-working with others

### Stage 4: Share Inspiration & Experiences

Also if everybody did the same at the same place and at the same time, everybody is gathering different experiences, impressions and thoughts, is noticing different things in nature.

Come together from time to time, sit in a circle under a nice tree for example and let the participants share their experiences and thoughts with each other.

Often it happens that participants just understand and notice their experiences & emotions, while sharing them with others.

### Stage 5: Putting the experience into a bigger frame

Explain how things are connected in an eco-system, how human beings are influencing the balance of nature. If the participants became interested, you have the chance also to explain more complex things in a theoretical way.

## **What are our goals? What do we want to reach while taking kids to nature?**

### **Our goals are for example:**

- that people do know more about nature
- that they do know more about how things are related to each other in nature
- that they get an understanding how human beings are influencing nature
- that they understand that nature is important/valuable for human beings and our well-being today and in future
- that nature is valuable because of itself not just because it is useful for us
- that people are getting emotionally connected to nature
- that they become more interested in nature
- that they are having a good time in nature and afterwards good memories about their time in nature which helps to create a positive attitude towards nature
- that especially kids spend some time in nature, without Computers, TV and Gameboys, enjoying fresh air, the weather
- that people are spending time at a quiet and peaceful place, relaxing
- that kids are losing their fear against deep forests, spiders or other animals
- that people like to go again into the nature
- that people get to know more about your home area
- to have fun
- to become curious (in general and about specific topics)

### **Create a magic moment**

“There is a time in the age between 5 – 12, when an impression, probably just

a short one for some seconds, can stay forever in the heart of the person.”

Try to create a happy impression during your workshops in nature for your participants. We do like to call them the magic moments, the highlights during such an activity, connected with your main message.





## Notable things before you take kids to nature

### Nature-experience-activities with children in nature

This list isn't complete and is meant to be extended with own ideas and needs.

#### Locality:

- Do I know the terrain? If not: When do I take the time to visit it before taking kids to that place?
- Are there danger points in the terrain and how do we deal with them?
- Is there a need of arranging something concerning the use of the terrain. For example do we need to ask the municipality or the owner to use the area?
- Is there a place (barn, hut, ...) to stay if bad weather appears?
- Are there toilets nearby – or: How to deal with if somebody needs a “toilette”?
- Is there a clear meeting point which is easy to find for kids and parents as well as kids that might get lost on the way?
- Are there any nature protection laws to follow during our activities on the terrain? Is it allowed to make fire, leave paths, pluck plants, collect mushrooms & berries ...)

#### Parents:

- Are all parents informed about the time scale?
- Are the parents informed about aims & activities of the project and what their kids need to have for the day (drinks, food ...)?
- Are the parents informed about the dealing with ticks and other dangers?
- Do I or another responsible person have the telephone number of the parents for emergencies so they can be contacted?
- Can the parents contact the team in

urgent !!! cases?

- Do the kids have to take food with them by themselves? (+enough to drink!!!)
- Do the parents have filled out and signed a „transfer of parental responsibility“?

#### During the activity:

- When will the kids be informed about the rules? (Already before or at the location?). It's important to check if all participants have understood the rules.
- Is it clarified in which area of the terrain the kids can move freely?
- Are the borders marked clearly and comprehensible where the kids have to stop?
- Are the kids informed about possible dangers? Do not frighten them!
- Is there a signal (howling like a wolf etc.) to gather everybody at the meeting point?
- Take garbage bags for your own or found garbage with you..
- Reserve some time for the ideas of the kids and for free play



### Team:

- Do we have enough team leaders, even if one of the kids has to go to a doctor, another one to the toilet or if something else unexpected happens?
- Can the team be contacted by phone e.g. by the parents?
- Do the team leader have enough to eat and drink to share with the children who have too few or nothing with them?
- Has somebody a first aid box with him and is somebody with first aid knowledge in the team?
- Are all teamer informed about the procedure and the task allocation? Who helps whom? Who is having what duties and responsibilities?
- Is there a list for materials to control their completeness afterwards?
- Shall the project be documented? If yes, who photographs and who writes a report? Have the parents given their agreement for photographing their children and publishing them?
- Is there enough time for an evaluation with the children in the end of the workshop and a critical analysis within the team afterwards?
- 



### An example of a three hour – program for kids

- **Developed during the international exchange -**

Overall, this concept is an example, which can also be used in other variants or only partially. The group should not be too big, that is why we recommend a group size of no more than 15 children for such kind of activity. In total it is a tour which is about two to three kilometers (it depends on the terrain) with several stops on the way.

The whole program is connected with a story. First of all the children get the task to count rubbish (see Station 2), without knowing what will happen afterwards. Caused of this “normal” beginning, the children do not expect a prepared story. The story starts by reading a letter that the children find by accident. An “archeologist” wrote the letter. By reading the letter the children know what to do next. The story starts.

Now the children follow the instructions from this and a second letter that the archeologist found. These letters must be prepared by the group leaders before-hand (see the detailed description for instructions). Through the letters the participants get to know the story and what will happen next. In addition the letters make the story more authentic. Because of this method a voltage is set up which should be held to the end. This means that the children have a goal and hopefully a motivation to carry on. The group-leaders do not have much to do. Together with the children they do follow the instructions given by the letters.



## Overview of the program points

1. How to start the activity?
2. Counting what does not belong to nature
3. How long does trash need until it decomposes?
  - Letter of the archeologist
  - Letter, that the archeologist found and some material connected to the letter
4. Finding the right trees
5. Do not touch the ground
6. Puzzle for the right way
7. Finding a picnic box randomly
  - Letter openly in or on the picnic-box
8. Ecosystem game
  - Envelope 1
9. Drawing postcards
  - Envelope 2
10. Compass
  - Envelope 3
11. Finding the treasure
  - Open the Letter in the treasure box
  - Activity
  - Envelope 2 with the final message and the end of the workshop

### **1. How to start the activity?**

It is always good to start with a common circle. If the children do not know each other, a little name game can be made.

A small warming up game is always good for children to become more awake and get in the swing.

#### Warm up game:

All children are in a circle. A child is now selected. This child is the “detective” and leaves the circle. The

detective turns around so that he/she cannot hear and see the other children. While the detective is gone, the other children determine a child who is now the “criminal”. Then the detective comes back into the circle. The criminal begins to make a movement like waving a hand and the other children have to do the same movement. After a short time the criminal changes his movement and again the children have to follow. The detective's goal is to find out who is the criminal who starts with the movements. The aim of the group is to conceal as long as possible who is the criminal. After the criminal is found, the detective changes and a new criminal is also chosen. When the detective needs too long to find the criminal, the thief's movement must be changed more often. The game should not take more time than 10 minutes.

After the warm up there is a brief introduction on the subject of trash. Are there different kinds of trash? Is it good to throw trash into the nature? The children are told that we are now going on a little walk to count trash.



## 2. Counting what does not belong to nature

**Activity:** While the group is walking along the street on one side, each child is secretly counting the number of objects that do not belong to nature. This will be mostly rubbish.

### Goal(s):

- Making the group aware of trash in nature and slow them down
- To have an activity to make them walk on the side of the street safely
- To have an interesting task on a usual boring path

**Time:** 5-10 min

**Location:** street or park, it should be not too long.

**Material:** if there is not enough trash beside the street, bring some

**To be aware of:** Everybody in the group should know the rules and to be aware of cars. For example if an adult shouts “Car” the kids should know what to do (go to the side, stop walking until the car passed by). One adult should be in the front and one in the end of the group.

## 3. How long does trash need until it decomposes?

**Activity:** The next task is to connect the number of years to different pieces of trash.

### Goal(s):

- children learn how many years each piece of trash needs to decompose in nature
- they have to work in a group and discuss and decide together which number of years fits to which kind of trash
- children remember better what they found out by themselves and if it is fun at the same time.

**Time:** 10 min.

**Location:** A place besides the way, where you can rest for a few minutes and where you do have enough space for a circle

**Material:** metal-can, glass bottle, plastic bag, newspaper, filter from a cigarette, cards with the numbers of years on it.

(I can look like that: All the trash is lying “by chance” around the place where you would like to rest)

**To be aware of:** The children should not touch the trash

### Description in detail:

In the middle of the circle five different pieces of rubbish and 5 cards, each with a year number on it. The annual figures represent how long the waste takes to be dismantled.

can	80-200 years
glass bottle	Forever
plastic bag (thin plastic bags for vegetables and fruits)	10-20 years
newspaper	6 weeks
filter from a cigarette	10-15 years

The children should allocate the annual figures to the respective waste pieces. All children should work together. Then the group leader gives the resolution. It is also possible to talk about the effects on nature and the environment. In addition, possible solutions and waste prevention can be spoken and discussed.

Before leaving that place, the first letter is found by chance. It can, for example, stick under a table, fall from something, or simply lie on the ground or is lying where we and in the end to put the five pieces for trash. Together, the letter is read.

### Letter of the archeologist:

*“22. of September. I am on a hill close to Kragujevac (that can be changed) . Last 6 weeks I stayed in this little house. My name is Jelena, I am an archeologist. Do you know what an archeologist is and does? (Wait for answers of the children)*

*Archeologists try to find old, old things from people that where living long time ago. Mostly we find them in the ground. Our goal is to understand through this objects how life was, for example 400 years ago. During my searching close to this place I found this envelope with very strange things inside. 10 photos of trees, but they are cut in half. I have no idea why. One envelope which I did not open. And three stones with numbers on it. Very interesting and very strange again. I believe there is a secret behind the three numbers.*

*Just a few minutes ago I got a message from my uncle, I need to come home as fast as possible. So I have just time to write this short letter and I hope some smart people will find my writing and the envelope that I found. I really want that just smart and serious people find it. That why I decided to hide it a little bit. You now found it. Wonderful. I hope you are smart and serious. Are you? Good luck. I hope you will understand what this is all about and to find out the secret of the three numbers.*



## **Letter that the archeologist found:**

### **Now read the second letter:**

*“Good. Very good. You found my letter and a few more things. If you follow my instructions and if you are smart enough to fulfill my tasks ... in the end you will find a treasure box. If you manage to open it, enjoy what is inside.*

*You want to know who I am. It is a secret and it will stay a secret. Sorry, it has to be like this. Are you ready for my first task? (Break – waiting for the reaction of the kids) Are you really? (Break – waiting for the reaction of the kids) Are you a good team and ready to work together as a team, supporting each other? (Break – waiting for the reaction of the kids) Yes? O.k., than you will manage to reach your goal.*

*In this envelope you find three stones. On each of them you find a number. Keep them; in the end they will be important for you.*

*Did you find already the photos? I took pictures of ten trees. Each picture I cut into half. Now you need to find the ten trees, just follow the street up the mountain. On the way you will find the 10 trees. Close to each tree I hided something that will tell you how to continue.*

*Now I wish you good luck. If you are successful, you will read from me again. Good bye ... maybe until soon, maybe until never*

It is up to you!”

## **4. Finding trees**

**Activity:** The children have to find trees, for this they have received photos in the envelope at the “trash stop”. Each child gets the half of a photo and has to find his or her partner with the other half of the photo of the same tree. Together, the children search now for the tree which is shown on the photo. When they found the tree they have to find something that is hided close to their tree. In a little bag they will find another piece of a photo. All found pieces are pieces of one photo that shows where to continue.

### **Goal(s):**

- To look at trees and to understand that each tree is different
- To take time for looking at trees, observing nature
- Connecting the photo to a tree an observe it

**Time:** 10 min

**Location:** The right side of the road between the location with the trash and a next station on the way to the treasure.

**Material:** photos of trees (in half), small bags, pieces of one photo (as puzzle pieces, the photo shows how to continue the tour) in each bag

**To be aware of:** that the children do not run across the street or down the hill

## 5. Puzzle for the right way

**Activity:** The children put their pieces of the photo, which they found in front of the trees in the small bags, together like a puzzle. All the pieces show a picture, which tell them where to go next. For example a gate, diversion from the path or something else conspicuous on the way. After the puzzle the kids have to find the right way.

### Goal(s):

- Teamwork
- Logical thinking
- Manage to find the way

**Time:** 2-5 min.

**Location:** close to the pictured place

**Material:** Single pieces of the second photo

## 6. Do not touch the ground

**Activity:** After finding the right way and walking a little bit, the next task is waiting for the group. They are coming to a sign that explains that the children are not allowed to touch the ground with their feet. They need to use wooden pieces to step on not to touch the ground for the next 25 Meter for example. Why? Cause there is an archaeological side on the way. This must not be destroyed, which is why the soil must not be touched directly by people. Self-made signs are showing the starting point and the ending point of the game. Beside the starting sign lie the wooden pieces with which the children as a group should use to cross the area without touching the ground

until reaching the second sign. The kids have to find a solution how to pass the side with the wooden pieces. (There should be one more piece of wood than participants). The way to cross should be that long so that the participants cannot put them all the way long to walk one by one just from wood to wood.

### Goal(s):

- teamwork

**Time:** 10 min.

**Location:** between two wooden signs

**Material:** pieces of wood (one more than participants, two big wooden signs with instruction

### Text of the first sign:

**Danger ! Danger ! Danger !**  
**Archeological area.**

Important excavations!!!  
Please do not destroy this. Do not touch the ground for that until the next sign. Please use the plates to cross this important area.

Thank you very much.

### Text of the second sign:

**End of the Archeological area.**

Thank you for your support.

**Put plates here !**

**To be aware of: /**

**Description in detail:** There is one piece of wood more available than participants. Together, the children must consider a strategy how to cross the area without touching the ground with their feet. The entire group must cross the area together.

(One possible strategy is for the children to put themselves in a long line at the starting point with each one piece in their hands. Only the first child has two pieces. This child starts by placing his pieces on the ground and making a step on them. The other children now submit their pieces. These are also placed on the ground before and the first can put on it. This will make his piece free and someone else can move on. So it goes on until everyone has overcome the path. The goal is to reach the second sign.

## **7. Finding a picnic box randomly**

**Activity:** The group continues and finds soon after a picnic box. The first letter is lying on the picnic-box. There are three more letters inside of the box. In the picnic-box the children find something to drink and to eat. Please choose natural and healthy food and drinks to give a good example. It is also important to ensure that as little rubbish as possible is produced and, for example, plastic cups are omitted. After all, especially after the topic of waste a little bit earlier today, you should give a good example and show the children that a picnic also works with little/no rubbish.

**Goal(s):**

- get energy
- rest
- learning about sustainable nutrition and waste prevention

**Time:** 20 min.

**Location:** a nice place for a picnic, if possible at a place with a good view

**Material:** food and drinks (e.g. fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables, water, juice), blankets, reusable cups

### **Letter openly on the picnic-box**

“You made it up to here. Great. Congratulation. Now you can rest a little bit, I prepared some food and some drinks for you. Afterwards I have some tasks.

That for you need to open after your picnic envelope number one, fulfil the in the letter mentioned task. Afterwards you should open envelope number two and so on ...”

## **8. Ecosystem game**

**Activity:** Every kid in this game is part of an ecosystem by choosing to "be" an animal or a plant. The game will show how animals and plants are connected to each other in an ecosystem and how they do build together one web, by throwing a ball of wool from animal or plant to another animal or plant. That way the children are creating a web.

**Goal(s):**



- understanding what an ecosystem is
- getting to know the food-chain in an eco-system
- learning something about the connection between every part of the ecosystem and how much each species is connected to the others and that every species is important in this system



**Time:** 10 min

**Material:** a ball of wool)

After finishing the picnic you just open the letter number 1. In the letter the game is getting introduced.

### **Envelope 1**

*"Was the food good? Do you feel better now with something in your stomach? All animals and all plants need to eat and to drink something, like you. Do you know for how long you can survive without eating and*

*drinking? Guess! (Waiting for answers and discussion of the participants) Three days you can survive without drinking, three weeks without eating. The following game will teach you how animals and plants are connected in nature. This connection between them is called "eco-system". Mostly the connection in an eco-system is about eating and hunting. One eats another.*

*You need to build now a small circle and one of you gets the ball of wool that you find in the picnic-box."*

*In this moment you should stop reading the letter to the kids, saying to the children ...Ahhh, I know this game, I can explain it to you. It will work better, if you explain the game step by step on your own, instead of reading just an explanation written in the letter.)*

### **How the game works:**

The first person who holds the ball of wool in his hands needs to decide what animal or plant he or she is and whom he/she eats or by whom he/she is eaten. Like "I am a small bird and I am eating a worm". Now this first participant needs to through the ball of wool, by keeping the end of the wool, to one other participant by saying "I am a little bird. You are the worm and I am eating you". This chosen worm is catching the wool-ball. Now he/she needs to decide whom the worm is eating or by whom the worm is also eaten. For example "I am worm and I am eating a leaf from a tree", throwing now the wool-ball to the chosen "leaf",

by holding one piece of the rope until everybody is part of it and everybody is a plant or an animal holding the rope together. Now it should look like a web where everybody is connected directly through the rope with two other participants of this game. It now looks like an eco-system-net. Now in our game one of the animals or plants disappears (become extinct). To show how this effects the other animals the chosen animal or plant should pull the rope a little bit. That should show: If you are not part of the eco-system anymore, it effects the ones you eat or the ones who eat you. The two who are directly connected with the one who pulls, feel through the rope that you are pulling at it. If they feel that they are effected, they also need to pull what is again effecting others. In the end every participant in the circle is pulling the wool-rope. This demonstrates, everybody is connected in an eco-system. That why it is important to protect everybody in nature, because everybody is needed to keep the eco-system stable.

## **9. Drawing postcards**

**Activity:** Every child gets a wooden frame (or one from cardboard) not bigger than 15 x 15 cm, to find by looking through the frame their favorite motive (flower, rock, tree) or a favorite view. After choosing the motive it is the task to draw that motive on a given blank postcard.

### **Goal(s):**

- the children get a souvenir (their own painted postcard)
- to calm them down
- to put the focus on the nature

- to promote creativity

**Time:** maybe 20 min. (it is up to how long the kids like to paint and that for difficult to guess)

**Material:** One frame for each child, two or three white postcards (A6) per child for a second or even third try, pencils of different colors

**To be aware of:** Children should not go too far. Tell them in what area they are allowed to search for their motive. Make up a sound to gather everybody again in the end of the activity. For example "If you hear me howl like a wolf, you all come back"



The activity will be explained by the following 2. letter:

### **Envelope 2**

*"Did you like the game about the eco-system? Did you understand that everybody is important in an eco-system? Each plant and each animal has its role and is needed. That is why we need to protect*

*the whole nature, not just the plants and animals that we like the most.*

*Did you already recognize how nice this place is. What a wonderful view. I am coming here nearly every day. I usually watch the nature in a way that you might find a little bit funny. I take a frame and I look at the landscape through the frame. By doing this the nature looks like a picture, like a drawing from a famous painter. I put some frames for you in this box. Each of you, please take one and look at the nature through the frame. I hope you will enjoy it, like I always do. Did you all take one? (Wait for the reaction).*

*Sometimes I imagine while doing it I am from another star and I am visiting with my space-ship the earth for the first time. Try it out. Imagine somebody is giving you guidelines from your planet. Follow the given instructions:\**

*“Look through your frame and find the highest hill! You found it? Is it nice, what is on the top of this hill? Do you see any houses close to the top of the hill?”*

*“Look with your frame from one house to the next and the next ... until you have seen 10 houses through your frame”*

*“Search for an insect and follow the insect for 20 seconds by looking at it through the frame. Try to find out what the insect is doing: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20”*

*“Try now to see at the same time flowers with three different colors through your frame”*

*Nice, did you enjoy it like me?*

*Then I always decide which “picture” or which view through the frame is the nicest. And afterwards I always sit down for a view minutes and I really draw it so I can take the view or the plant or the rock as a painting home. Do you like drawing? I hope so. In the box you find colors and postcards. You can paint your picture and you can take it home like I always do. Now walk a little bit, find something that you would like to paint. Sit down and do it. I think you will enjoy it”*



After you are done open the last, the third envelope.

\*change the tasks up to the landscape and surrounding you are in

## 10. Compass

**Activity:** Finding the way to the treasure box with the help of the compass.

**Goal(s):**

- learn how to find direction and to work with a compass

**Time:** 5-10 min.

**Location:** Where you can sit well in a small circle

**Material:** compass (1 or 2) and the letter in Envelope 3

### Envelope 3

*"Done? Do you like your picture? Maybe you painted the mountains, or a flower ... or ... there is so much to see in nature. I would like to draw a picture of everything. But it is time to move on and to leave this wonderful place. Finally you need to use a compass to continue the right way. You can find the compass also in the box. Do you know what a compass is for and how to use it? (Waiting for reactions and explain)*

*Try it out. ... That will help you to find the right direction to move on and to find soon the treasure box.*

*With the help of the compass you can find out the directions north, south ... and? Do you know the other two missing directions? The needle always points out where north is. You need to go into the following direction ..... (Here you need to add the direction)*

*Bye. Talk to you later or maybe not, if you do not find the way with the compass we will not.*



## 11. Finding the treasure

**Activity:** Let the children find the treasure-box, which is closed with a number lock. This lock can now be opened with the numbers that are painted on the stones that were inside of the letter that was found by the archeologist. The children will hopefully manage to find the connection between the stones and the lock by themselves. If they do not, give them a tip.

**Goal(s):**

- they get a reward
- practice patience
- remembering the first letter

**Time:** 20-30 min.

**Location:** maybe 300 meter away from the picnic-box.

**Material:** treasure box, a lock, popcorn corn, oil, sugar, matches, a last letter, the stones with numbers for opening the lock (the stones they got already before, the other items should be in the box)

**To be aware of:** children need to have patience

**Description in detail:** The treasure contains corn grains because a reward does not always have to be candy. The children learn from the fact that you can also eat many things from nature directly. From the corn grains you can make popcorn together over the fire which you now should make together.

Make popcorn yourself: Place corn grains in a saucepan or pot with a little oil so that the floor is just covered. Put the pot on the fire and wait. If the most of the corn grains have burst, take the pot off the fire so that the corn does not burn. If you want you can spice the popcorn with sugar or salt. This should be done as long as the popcorn is hot, as the spice will be more liable to the grains. But beware, do not burn.

(But you can also choose another treasure)

### **Open Letter in the treasure box**

*"Fantastic, you made it. You understood the compass and it showed you the right way. And you also did not lose the stones otherwise you would not have been able to open this treasure box.*

*Now you also found the golden little seeds that I put inside .... I was cooking them, they did not taste, I was chewing them, also not nice. Do you know what to do with them? I hope you are more successful than me.*

*After preparing the seeds and eating them, you can read the second letter in this box; it is the last one."*

### **Envelope 2 (closed)**

*"Was it tasty, did you manage to do something with this golden seeds? If we meet some day please tell me what you did and how it was tasting.*

*You spent now a few hours in nature, without internet and without a mobile-phone. Did you miss the technology? I hope not and I hope it was a good time for you. I tried to show you how beautiful nature is. That for I gave you the frames. Did you find a favorite place? Was it easy to decide about it? Do you remember, you also had to find the right tree from the photo for completing the puzzle? Did you notice, all trees look different. There are no two trees in the world that look the same. Trees are so important. Would life be possible on earth without*

*trees? What do you think? Maybe you should talk about it. What I am really angry about, the trash. Did you see trash in nature today? I think we need to respect nature more. And the first step is, not to through trash into the nature.*

*Now it is time for me to say good bye, maybe we will meet some day ... maybe in nature. I will be around."*

### **The end:**

While sitting around the fire it is good to speak together about the activity, because it is a cozy atmosphere and a hopefully quit moment.

Questions for an evaluation are for example: What did you learn? What was new? What did you like the most? What was not so good?

### **To Do-List before starting the program:**

- print or write the letters (probably you need to make some changes)
- draw the shields, position them and the wood pieces
- paint numbers on the stone
- take and print photos of the trees, cut each of them into two pieces
- take and print a photo through that the participants understand how to continue, cut the photo into as many small pieces as trees needs to be find by the kids
- Place the pieces of this photo in small bags close to the trees that the children need to find.
- trash examples and corresponding cards with the right annual figures
- pack and position the picnic box (food, letter, material for drawing postcards, compass, wool)
- pack and position the treasure-box
- have a place ready for the camp-fire in the end

### **Material list:**

- wood pieces (number of persons plus 1)
  - “old” paper for the letters
  - trash examples
  - cards explaining how many years the different kinds of trash needs to decompose
  - 2 shields
  - photos of trees (two children needs to find one tree)
  - puzzle-photo
  - stones with numbers
  - cardboard for postcards (for each three)
  - frames
  - crayons / pencils
  - picnic-box
  - food and drinks, maybe dishes
  - compass
  - ball of wool
  - treasure box
  - corn grains
  - sugar
  - oil
  - pot
  - matches
  - firewood
- 

## **Five nice warm up games for groups:**

### **1. Group order**

Ask the group to line themselves in order based on certain criteria. Some examples are by:

- Birthday
- Height
- Shoe size
- Hair color
- Eye color
- ...

Make it more challenging by setting a rule that members can't speak to each other. You can do this as a get-to-know-you-better activity. As members move around to organize themselves in order, you'll notice how they communicate to complete the task and who takes on the role of organizers or leaders.

### **2. Helium Stick**

A task that is usually funny, surprising and also a bit frustrating at the same time is called "Helium Stick" or "Magic Cane". This activity is very useful to drive lessons about teamwork to achieve common mission.

Have the group of 8-12 members, break them into two lines and face the two lines to each other. Each team is getting one long stick. They should be very similar. Important is to have very light and thin sticks. Now each participant is holding the stick with one straight finger, together with the other

team-members. The mission is now to lower the stick together to the ground without letting it fall and with one finger



of each participant at the stick all the time, without grabbing the stick or curling the finger.

What usually happens: Instead of going down the stick is going up and up.

A seemingly simple activity becomes a daunting task as the stick rises almost instantly due to the small upward pressure exerted by fingers of participants in order to remain in contact with the stick. This stirs up mix emotions of confusion, laughter and annoyance till the group learns to focus and unite to lower the stick.

### 3. Human Knot

This game combines team fun with communication and creativity. The participants are asked to stand in a really round circle, shoulder to shoulder, facing inside of the circle. Each member is asked to extend his or her arms in the front while closing eyes. After that they should go at the same time slowly into the circle. While walking they try to find and grab with closed eyes two other hands. After you found two hands you are allowed to open your eyes. If you not manage to find two hands in the end you are also allowed to open your eyes.

The goal of the game is to untangle everyone by forming a circle again. But you need to keep holding the two hands that you found.





#### 4. Three truths and a lie

With absolutely no tools required this team building game could be done anytime and anywhere without much hassles.



All you require is three or more members sitting in a circle, with each person taking turns to state four facts about themselves, out of which three are true and one is a lie. The instruction is to frame the lie realistically rather than making it look hard to believe and easy to guess. (You can also reduce the facts. The group should not be too big, otherwise the game takes too long and the participants are getting bored). Once the facts are stated, the other team members need to identify the lie from the four statements. Once all are done with guessing, the right answer is revealed at the end.

It is a good way to get to know each other better. Often it is very funny, because the games works the best, if also the true facts are sounding as it could be the lie.

#### 5. Name-Web

After each child has said his name and introduced himself, this game can be

started. Standing in a circle, one child starts and throws a ball of wool to another child. At the same time it has to call the name of that child and to hold the end of the wool in his hand. Then the child that was named throws the wool to another child and calls the name of it. Again, the wool thread must be held again. This continues until all children are part of it, holding a bit of the string in his hand. Now it should look like a spider web. In this web a pen is raked vertically in the middle at the string. Below the pen you put a bottle. Now it is the task of the children to put the pen in the bottle together by moving the web together, by going down together so that also the pen goes down. When this is done, the pen is removed from the net. The last task for the children is to rewind the wool. For this they have to throw the wool back from person to person and say the name of them, but this time it goes from back to front.



# Environmental games with child- ren in and with the nature:

## 1. Meet a Tree

**Concepts, attitudes and qualities taught by the game:** empathy, awareness, observing nature with different senses, trusting each other

**Number of participants:** 2 or more

**Best age:** 4 years and up

**Material:** Blindfolds



This game is played in pairs of two. One is blindfolding it's Partner and leading him (after turning him around a few times so he/she loses a bit the orientation) through the forest to any tree that he/she chooses. (How far the distance is should also depend on the age of the blinded participant. For all, except for very young children, a distance of 20-30 meters is not too far.)

After arrival at the chosen tree:

Help the "blind" participant to explore his tree and to feel its uniqueness. For that specific suggestions are best. Instead of saying "Explore your tree," be specific. For example: "Is this tree still alive?...Can you put your arms around it?...Is the tree older than you are?...Can you find plants growing on it?...Animal signs?"



Also it is possible to announce the direction of extraordinary signs: "Feel some signs nearby the roots...above your head...!"

When your partner finished exploring, lead him back to where you began, but take an indirect route. Turn him a few times around before taking away the blindfold.

Now, remove the blindfold and let the participant try to find the tree with his eyes open. Suddenly, as he searches for his tree, the forest becomes a collection of individual trees. A tree can be an unforgettable experience in the child's life.



## 2. Tree Silhouette

### **Concepts, attitudes and qualities**

**taught by the game:** adaptation, tree profiles, observing nature

**Number of participants:** 2 or more

**Best age:** 5 years and up

**Material:** none

Find a place where several different kinds and/or different looking trees are growing. One child shapes his body to look like a particular tree and the other children try to guess which of the nearby standing tree he is. A group can also play this game by dividing up in teams: a whole team can portray one tree. This game helps the members of a group to feel comfortable with each other, and also develops acting skills.

## 3. Sounds

### **Concepts, attitudes and qualities**

**taught by the game:** auditory awareness, observing nature, be patient

**Number of participants:** 1 and more

**Best age:** 3 years and up

**Material:** none

Children lie down on their backs (or stand separately) and put their both fists up in the air. They close their eyes for "to hear well". Now they count all new noises by extending one finger. When they have found 10 different noises, they may open their eyes, waiting for the others.

There are some variations:

Can you count until ten without hearing a bird?

Catch only natural sounds

Catch only technical sounds



## 4. Sound-Map

### **Concepts, attitudes and qualities**

**taught by the game:** Auditory awareness, calmness, observing nature

**Number of participants:** 1 or more

**Best age:** 5 years and up

**Material:** Index card and pencil per player



The game begins by showing the group an A4 paper/card board with an X in the center. Tell the players that the card is a map and that the X shows where they're sitting. When they hear a sound they should make a mark on the card that aptly describes the sound. The mark's location should indicate as accurately as possible the direction and distance of the sound to yourself. The marks should be interpretive, not literal: the players don't have to draw pictures of plants and animals just a few lines that represent the sound - for example, two wavy lines indicating wind or a musical note indicating a singing bird. In other words they should spend little time drawing and most of

the time listening.

Tell the players to keep their eyes closed while they listen. Explain that cupping their hands behind their ears provides a reflective surface for catching sounds, creating a shape like the sensitive ears of a fox or kangaroo. To hear sounds behind them, they needn't turn their heads, but just cup their hands in front of their ears.

Select a site where the group can hear a variety of sounds. Meadows, streams, and forests are fine. It's important to have everyone find a special „listening place” quickly, so that some aren't walking around while others are already listening. It works to give the participants one minute to find a spot and tell them to stay in the same spot until the end of the game. They should not sit too close to each other. Giving the players enough time to disperse fairly widely will ensure a diversity of sound maps and greater interest in sharing.

How long you should play depends on the group's age attention span, and how well-supplied the environment is with sounds. A good basic guideline is 10 minutes for adults, 5-10 minutes for children. I like to call the group back together by imitating a natural sound or blowing a crow or duck call. As the players assemble, ask them to share their maps with a partner.

It's sometimes hard to find a site that's protected from the sounds of cars or something similar, but these noisy areas are ideal for teaching lessons about noise pollution. It could be also a task for the children to make two sound maps, the first one near a busy street and the second in a quiet, natural spot.

After the game, ask them where they felt more comfortable. This is a good way to build children's conscious appreciation of natural areas.



After the children have drawn their maps and shared them, you can ask questions such as:

- How many different sounds did you hear?
- Which sounds did you like best? Why?
- Which sounds did you like least? Why?
- Which sounds had you never heard before? Do you know what made the sounds?



## 5. Bat and moth

**Concepts, attitudes and qualities taught by the game:** auditory awareness, concentration trusting each other

**Number of participants:** 10 or more

**Best age:** 5 years and up

**Material:** one blindfold



When the group has formed a circle of around 3 - 4 meter in diameter, it chooses a member to be a bat. Then let him/her comes to the center of the circle to be blindfolded. Designate two or three other children as moths and ask them also to come to the center of the circle. The bat tries to catch the moths. Whenever the bat calls out "Bat!" the moths call back "Moth!" Tell the moths: "Every time you hear the bat call out 'Bat!' it's his radar signal hitting you. He sends it out to see if there is anything out there. His sound bounces off you and returns to him like a radar signal. The return signal is the word 'Moth!' that you shout.

Now the bat knows moths are near - and he's ready to hunt! – to touch the moths with his hands. The moths try to escape from the bat, but just inside of the circle that is built by the other participants. The bat tracks down and tags the moths by listening to their responses. It takes good concentration to be a successful bat. The circle built by the kids is the hunting area. This way the children learn how bats hunt.





## **6. Eco-System-Web (already described in the concept of the tour)**

**Concepts, attitudes and qualities taught by the game:** *how animals and plants are connected to each other in nature (the term "eco-system").*

**Number of participants:** 6, better a few more

**Best age:** 6 years and up

**Material:** one ball of wool

*You need to build a circle and one of you gets the ball of wool.*

How the game works:

The first person who holds the ball of wool in his hands needs to decide what animal or plant he or she is and whom he/she eats or by whom he/she is eaten. Like "I am a small bird and I am eating a worm". Now this first participant needs to through the ball of wool, by keeping the end of the wool, to one other participant by saying "I am a little bird. You are a worm and I am eating you". This chosen worm is catching the wool-ball. Now he/she needs to decide whom the worm is eating or by whom the worm is also eaten. For example "I am a worm and I am eating a leaf from a tree", throwing now the wool-ball to the chosen "leaf", by holding one piece of the rope until everybody is part of it and everybody is a plant or an animal holding the rope together. Now it should look like a web where everybody is connected directly through the rope with two other participants of this game. It now looks like an eco-system-net. Now in our game one of the animals or plants disappears (become extinct). To show

how this effects the other animals the chosen animal or plant should pull the rope a little bit. That should show: If you are not part of the eco-system anymore, it effects the ones you eat or the ones who eat you. The two who are directly connected with the one who pulls, feel through the rope that you are pulling at it. If they feel that they are effected, they also need to pull what is again effecting others. In the end every participant in the circle is pulling the wool-rope. This demonstrates, everybody is connected in an eco-system. That why it is important to protect everybody in nature, because everybody is needed to keep the eco-system stable.

If your participants are older or if your program is dedicated to a specific eco-system, you can also appoint an eco-system like "forest" and that all the participants (chosen plants and animals) should belong to this eco-system.



## 7. Camera – game



### **Concepts, attitudes and qualities**

**taught by the game:** Aesthetic appreciation, trusting each other, observing the nature in detail - discovering details

**Number of participants:** 2 or more

**Best age:** 6 years and up

**Material:** none (index cards and pencil)

One player takes the role of a photographer, and the partner plays the camera. The photographer guides the camera, who keeps his eyes closed, on a search for beautiful and interesting pictures. When the photographer sees something he would like to take a photo of, he points the camera's lens (eyes) at it, framing the object he wants to "shoot." Then he presses carefully the shutter button



(which is the shoulder or the head of the camera) to open the lens. After 3 - 5 seconds the photographer should

press the "button" again. That means the camera needs to close its eyes again. While having the eyes open for this short time the camera is not allowed to move his head to look around, just straight like set up by the photographer. Now the photographer moves on together with his camera to search for the next nice place to take another picture. It's important that the camera keeps his eyes closed between the pictures, so that the 3 to 5 second "exposure" will have the impact of surprise.

Encourage the photographers to be creative in choosing and framing the pictures. Tell them, "You can make stunning photographs by taking shots from unusual angles and perspectives. For example, you can both lie down under a tree and take your picture looking upward, or you can put your camera very close to a tree's bark or some leaves. Try looking down into a flower, or panning the horizon. Be open to the opportunities of the moment."

Because the Camera Game uses nature experiences instead of verbal explanations, very young children can participate just as fully as adults. It's very touching to watch five-year-olds guide their parents or grandparents, taking pictures and sharing their delight in natural things.

The preferred "exposure time" is 3 to 5 seconds. With longer exposures, the camera's mind begins to wander, reducing the impact of the picture just as too much light overexposes real film.

It's also very important to encourage the photographers and cameras to talk only when it's unavoidable. Explain that silence creates pictures that have greater impact for the camera.



Tell the photographers they'll have about 10 minutes to take pictures, and then they'll change roles. It works well to tell the photographers to take a certain number of pictures (four to five are fine), then to change places with their partners. With these rules, everyone will finish at about the same time.

You can play the game also in that way, that the "camera" has to find with open eyes all the spots he pictured.

After everyone has played both roles, there is also the possibility to draw the photos by remembering what was seen. The goal of the game is to give the players a more lively appreciation of nature's beauty.



## 8. Guessing the animal

**Concepts, attitudes and qualities taught by the game:** Knowledge about animals, how to ask good questions, patience, concentration

**Number of participants:** 2 or more

**Best age:** 5 years and up

**Material:** paper and pencil



Before the game starts the small pieces of paper should be prepared. On each piece of paper must stand a type of animal, for example: fish, cow, cat. The animals should be different and not too difficult. Now every child gets his or her own piece of paper. But nobody should see what kind of animal they have. Therefore the small papers must be taped on the back of every child. After that every child has to find a partner, because it's a partner task. The children now have to find out by asking the partner, which animal sticks on her back. The questions may only be asked in such a way that the partner can only answer "yes" or "no".





## **9. Beeing an ecosystem or an animal**

### **Concepts, attitudes and qualities**

**taught by the game:** Knowledge about animals and ecosystems, how to present something with pantomime, patience, concentration

**Number of participants:** 2 or more

**Best age:** 6 years and up

**Material:** non

During this game, the children have to portray various animals or ecosystems in pantomime. The other children should then guess which animals or habitats are presented. It is better if there are more than two participants because in a group the children have more ideas how to present an animal or an ecosystem. In addition there are enough children for guessing. So if there are more children than two you have to split them into groups.



# Group-Building and Social Learning while taking kids to nature

When children reach the age of 5 or 6 years, they typically become very social beings. Establishing friendships and figuring out peer group dynamics become central to their beings. Through their elementary years, they are interested in social rules and morals, appropriate interactive behavior, and working together.

Thus this is a ripe time for formation of teams and collaborative projects.

Another characteristic of this stage of development is the blossoming of the imagination and thus the ability to understand the perspective of another person. Empathy can be channeled into ways to contribute to the good of others, such as volunteer work for their wider community.

Because children at this age also want to have a voice and achieve intellectual freedom, they are passionate about taking part in plans and decisions, and like to experience leadership. (Teampedia)

Several activities listed by Teampedia are designated in the category “children can be included.” When including those of ages 6 – 12, consider such things as how you model cooperation, ways they can contribute ideas, how they can feel

useful, and what decisions they can make.

Even if your group consists of members who all share the same race, religion, nation of origin or gender identity, there are many other ways that individuals can be different.

We tend to make assumptions based on style, mannerisms, etc. So, it is valuable for team members to get to know each other as individuals, and also to be aware of stereotyping in all interactions in life. How do you break down stereotypes and foster inclusion and equity within your team?

<https://www.teampedia.net/wiki/>

[https://www.teampedia.net/wiki/index.php/Category:Children can be included](https://www.teampedia.net/wiki/index.php/Category:Children%20can%20be%20included)





# Inclusion - What is it?

Many people have already heard the term. But what exactly is "inclusion"? And what does inclusion mean for each of us personally?

Inclusion means that every person naturally belongs to our society. No matter what you look like, what language you speak or if you have a disability. Everybody can participate. For example: Children with and without disabilities learn together at school. If every person can be present everywhere, at the workplace, at home or at leisure: that's inclusive.

## Being different together



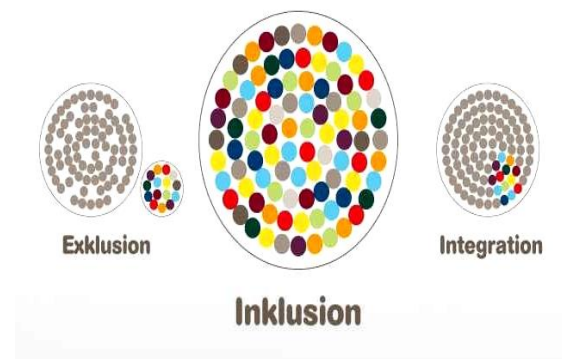
When all people participate, it is **Inclusion for all**

Inclusion can only work if many people join in. Everyone can help: for example, at school, in sports clubs, at work, at leisure, in the family. The more we know about inclusion, the less fear we have to deal with it. Nobody than says just as a reflex: "They cannot participate."

normal to be different. And everyone has something of it: for example, if there are fewer stairs, people with strollers, older people and people with disabilities can be much better mobile. In an inclusive world, all people are open to other ideas, other behaviors, needs and lifestyles. Every person should be accepted as he or she is.

## Inclusion is a human right

Everyone has the right to be part of everything. The right to inclusion is enshrined in the UN Disability Rights Convention. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a treaty that many countries have signed



Your activities can be more inclusive as you might think. Check to what extent your projects in nature can be inclusive, can be made accessible for people with special needs. But then it is also important to seek direct contact with organizations through which you can address people with inclusion needs.

Try it out. Everybody will benefit from it, not just the people with an handicap.

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