

Outdoor Adventures

Nature is the greatest teacher, and you can help facilitate the lesson! Start by helping your child identify a safe place to explore, where she can be monitored as needed, but also where she can feel truly autonomous. Sure, it might make you a little nervous to have her tramping through the outer reaches of the backyard, or a set of unfamiliar forest. But during this time alone, she'll begin to forge a personal relationship with the natural world, that she can carry with her through school and into adulthood.

To encourage this ritual, create a "Back to Nature" backpack together, filled with everything she needs to explore and enjoy the natural world.

What You Need:

- A journal
- A pencil, pen, and colored pencils
- A magnifying glass
- Binoculars
- Zip-lock or clear plastic bags for collecting things
- A camera
- A field guide of birds, trees, plants, insects, or anything else of interest.
- Water and snacks
- Whatever else she thinks she needs to be comfortable and engaged outside



What You Do:

1. Hit the trail in search of a perfect spot to explore and observe the natural world. Need some inspiration? Here are a list of writing prompts and activities to jumpstart your child's adventure. Give her one or more, and let her loose!
 - **Sensory Free Write:** Make a list of everything you can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel.
 - **20 Questions:** Write 20 questions that come to your mind about the area you are in.
 - **Macro Sketch:** Make a drawing of the landscape around you, including as many details as possible.
 - **Micro Sketch:** Make a drawing of a single thing near you, including as many details as possible.
 - **Map It:** Make a map of the area in which you are sitting — use symbols and make a legend.
 - **Collection:** Collect non-living items from the area that have something in common. Write about them.
 - **Journal Entry:** Describe one animal (or plant, or tree) that you can see from your spot. Now describe what you imagine that animal or thing will do for the next hour, day, or week.
 - **Weather Report:** Describe the weather. Use as many different verbs and adjectives as possible.
2. When she returns from her time "in the field," even if it has only been a few minutes, talk about her experience. "What did you see? How did you feel? What were you reminded of?"
3. If your child noted down questions about the area she was in, be sure to help her find answers. The more she can connect her experience to other parts of her life, the more these sojourns will have a positive and lasting effect on her. This time will help her make a deep connection with the natural world (an all too rare gift in this high tech day and age!), which she'll hopefully carry with her not only through school, but well into adulthood.