

Play Outside NC Connection Card



Match Up!

Focus On: Matching

Bring & Find: Natural objects found outside, in the woods, a park or back/front yard.

Making the Connection: Collect two of each child-friendly natural object from outside that fit into a child's hand with the child/ren. Sit together and put the items that match into separate piles on the ground.

Next, choose one item and tell the child what it is. Talk about the item and what it is and how she/he can use it and/or how animals use it. Invite the child/ren to find its match and show you. Repeat the same steps. When you see that your child understands the concept, ask them to pick an item and you find the match. Continue in this way until all the items are matched.

Adapted from a play activity submitted by the [Beaufort-Hyde Partnership for Children](#).

A project of the [NC Institute for Child Development Professionals](#) in partnership with [UNC-TV](#).

Play Outside NC Connection Card



Water

Focus On: Observation Skills & Senses

Bring & Find: Ice cubes, a cup, a stone & sunshine

Making the Connection: Take ice cubes out of your freezer or separate from a drink and place the ice on a stone or stump. Ask the children to tell you how the ice feels? Is the ice hard or soft? Can you see through the ice cube? Is it hot or cold? Now place the ice on the stone in the sunshine. Ask the child to watch how the ice is changing.

Ask the child what they see. How is it changing? What is ice made from? Is it getting bigger or smaller? What can we do with a melted ice cube? Ask them to look around their surroundings. Do they see water in a puddle? In a pond, lake, stream or river? Do they see raindrops on a leaf? Where does it come from?

Adapted from a play activity submitted by [Child Care Resources, Inc.](#)

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Play Outside NC Connection Card



Measuring with Dandelions

Focus On: Questioning, Comparing & Observing

Bring & Find: 3 – 5 dandelions

Make the Connection: Dig up or cut 3 to 5 dandelion flowers and lay them on the ground. Compare the length of the flowers. Ask the child which one is the shortest or the longest. Is it longer than their finger? Are they shorter than their shoe or longer than your finger?

Look at and talk about the stages of the blossoms, from seeds to buds to flowers. Find flowers in each stage of growth and share with the child/ren.

Place one flower with different size blossoms or in different stages in each of the child's hands. Ask them if they feel like they weigh the same. Which one is heavier? Why is it heavier? Or why is the other one lighter?

Adapted from a play activity submitted by the [NC Museum of Natural Sciences](#)

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Play Outside NC Connection Card



Build a Nest

Focus On: Texture, shapes, size, animals

Bring & Find: Paper bag, mud/soil & water, nesting materials found outside

Making the Connection: Using a small paper bag, mud, and a variety of outside material a bird could find, help a child/ren to explore where animals live. Ask the child where birds make their home. Ask where they sleep – do they have a bed with pillows and blankets? What is their bed made of? Look up in a tree and help the child find a nest. Encourage the child to call out what they see in the nest. What do they see?

Walk around and collect outside objects to make a nest. Lay the collection of nest items on the ground, then help the child to tear or roll down the top of the bag to make it smaller. Find a mud puddle or help the child make a muddy mixture using soil and water to help the nesting material stick together. Help the child to layer mud and nesting materials to make it strong. Ask the children to find the softest material to line the inside of the bird nest and place inside. After the nest is dry, place it in a bird-friendly place and watch it over time to see if a bird makes it their home!

Adapted from a play activity submitted by the [Beaufort County Community College Early Childhood Department](#)

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Sunflower Patch

Focus On: How Things Grow, Size, Color

Bring & Find: Sunflower or green bean seeds, cup/pot, garden soil, water & sunshine

Making the Connection: Sunflowers and green beans are easy to grow. Gather seeds from a neighbor, family member, friend or store. If possible, collect seeds for different kinds of sunflowers or beans to watch how they grow and compare their colors, sizes, weights and height with the child/ren. Plant the seeds with the child/ren in a garden, in a large plastic container or garden pot with holes in the bottom and place in a sunny location. Ask the child how long they think it will take before a plant will pop up. Turn over the seed packet and show the child the number of days and mark it on a calendar. Help the child water the plants to keep the soil moist. When ready, pick, wash, and eat the beans. Use the sunflowers for a pretty decoration and then let the flowers dry outside, upside down on the stalks and encourage the child to watch for birds feeding on the seeds.

Adapted from a play activity submitted by the [Natural Learning Initiative](#)

A project of the [NC Institute for Child Development Professionals](#) in partnership with [UNC-TV](#).

Play Outside NC Connection Card



Dancing with the Wind

Focus On: Outdoor Play & Physical Activity/Movement

Bring & Find: A patch of flowers on a windy day & music

Making the Connection: Walk outside on a windy day with a child/ren and ask them to pick out things around them that are moving. Ask if they can feel the wind on their face. Can they feel the wind in their hair? Does it make their hair move or dance?

Ask the child/ren if they can find a flower dancing? A leaf flying in the wind? A tree branch moving in the breeze. Ask the child/ren to look up at the clouds. Ask if they are moving too?

Ask the child/ren to pretend they are a flower, a leaf, a tree moving in the wind and dance with them. Encourage them to move their hands and arms, feet and legs to act like what they see dancing in nature.

Adapted from a play activity submitted by the [NC Museum of Natural Sciences](#)

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Play Outside NC Connection Card



What Do You See?

Focus On: Comparing sizes and shapes & observing

Bring & Find: Magnifying glass(es)

Making the Connection: Try this! Here is a PBS KIDS Sid the Science Kid activity that helps children and adults “explore and learn” about their environment using their body, magnifying glasses and a variety of natural objects from their own backyard. Go outside with the child/ren and take a magnifying glass along with you to help the child/ren experience looking closely at nature. Find rocks, leaves, acorns, tree barks, dirt, bugs, flowers. Ask the child to tell you what they see with their eyes and then what they see with the magnifying glass. Help the children use words to describe what they are seeing.

Back home, preschool age children can make their own pictures to record what they’ve seen using paint, markers, crayons, etc. Adults can read books about the outdoors and ask the child to tell them what objects they saw outside that match what they see in the book. Watch the Sid the Science Kid on PBS for more fun activities for young children!

Adapted from a play activity submitted by the [PBS KIDS Sid the Science Kid](#) Magnification Observation Activity.
A project of the [NC Institute for Child Development Professionals](#) in partnership with [UNC-TV](#).

Play Outside NC Connection Card



Creating Patterns

Focus On: Same and Different, Patterns and Sequences

Bring & Find: Collect groups of natural objects such as pinecones, rocks, shells, nuts, sticks, leaves, feathers and seeds.

Making the Connection: Encourage children to collect, count, and sort objects. Ask the child/ren which ones are the same. Which objects are different? Are the objects all the same color? Which objects are the same sizes? Which ones are different sizes?

Help the child/ren create patterns from their collection by asking them to place the objects in different orders or groups. Then ask the child to mix them up and make a new picture of like items together or items in a sequence or pattern.

Hint – A pattern or a sequence is created when you repeat the same order 3 times.

Adapted from a play activity submitted by the [Beaufort County Community College Early Childhood Department](#)

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Play Outside NC Connection Card



Let's Find a Bear!

Focus On: Senses, Sounds and Language

Bring & Find: We're Going on a Bear Hunt book, picture of a bear paw print, binoculars, and a stuffed bear hidden at the end of walk you will take with the child/ren.

Making the Connection: Read We're Going on a Bear Hunt book several times to the child/ren before you start the hunt so they know the order of events. On the day of the bear hunt, place the stuffed bear at the end of the bear hunt path and make bear prints in the dirt with a stick or cut them out and lay them along the path. Make/take play binoculars out of paper towel tubes taped together. Go outside and follow the prints with the child/ren and encourage the children to touch the grass and feel water, sand or mud and to go under, over and through safe spaces/objects. Take along the play binoculars and show the child/ren how to look through them for the bear. Growl like a bear and ask the child/ren to do it too, loudly and softly. Use your words and ask the child/ren to repeat after you when going over, under and through objects/spaces and how the sand, water and grass feel too!

Adapted from a play activity submitted by the [Beaufort-Hyde Partnership for Children](#).

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Play Outside NC Connection Card



Sound-Picture Matching Game

Focus On: Listening, Predicting, Comparing & Contrasting Skills

Bring & Find: Clear plastic containers with lids and a collection of small items from the outdoors that will fit inside the tubs with enough room to move around in the tub. **Hint -** Use things that will sound differently (such as a rock, sand, stick, a pine cone) as well as items that do not make a sound when the tub is shaken (such as a feather, a leaf, a flower petal).

Making the Connection: Place one item in each tub. Ask the children to shake the tubs and listen carefully. Ask the child/ren what they hear. Then ask a child to open the tub and look inside! What did their ears hear? Did it match what they guessed? Try another one and follow the same steps to help children listen, predict, compare and contrast sounds.

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