

Outdoor Earth Day Activities

Outdoor play builds **gross motor skills, curiosity, language, confidence, and self-regulation**. Use these activities in a yard, playground, park, or even a small outdoor space. Choose what fits your setting and always adjust for weather and safety.

Infants (Birth–12 months)

1) Blanket Nature Time

Materials: blanket, a few safe items (soft ball, teether), optional: bubbles (adult only)

Setup: Place blanket in shade; position baby on back/tummy/supported sit.

Directions:

1. Sit close and describe what the baby sees/hears: “I hear birds.” “Leaves are moving.”
2. Hold a leaf or flower *out of reach* and say: “Look—green!”
3. Give the baby time to watch the sky/trees (30–90 seconds).
4. End with gentle stretches or a cuddle.

Tip: This is perfect as a calm break between more active outdoor play for older kids.

2) Breeze & Scarf Sensory Play

Materials: lightweight scarf or ribbon (adult holds), shaded spot

Directions:

1. Hold the scarf above the baby and move it slowly with the breeze.
2. Say: “Up... down... soft... wave.”
3. Let the baby reach and grasp briefly (supervised).



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4. Switch sides to encourage turning head and tracking.
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3) Outdoor “Roll & Reach”

Materials: soft ball

Directions:

1. Place the baby at tummy time on a mat/blanket.
2. Roll the ball slowly in front (not too far).
3. Encourage reaching: “Can you touch it?”
4. Celebrate effort: “You reached!”

Safety: Keep baby away from direct sun and always supervise.

Young Toddlers (1–2 years)

1) Sidewalk Chalk Scribble Zone

Materials: chunky sidewalk chalk, space to draw

Directions:

1. Demonstrate: “Draw a line... big circle... dot-dot-dot.”
2. Let toddlers scribble freely.
3. Add simple prompts: “Can you make a big line?” “Find your red chalk.”
4. Optional: draw a simple road and push toy cars along it.

Tip: Toddlers love “erase” play—give a damp cloth to wipe chalk.



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2) Bubble Chase & Pause

Materials: bubbles

Directions:

1. Blow bubbles and invite children to pop them.
2. Add an attention cue: "Ready... set... STOP!" (pause blowing)
3. Praise listening: "You stopped your feet!"

Safety: Keep bubble solution away from mouths; wash hands after.

3) Nature Basket Walk

Materials: small bucket/basket, optional picture card of "leaf/rock/stick"

Directions:

1. Give each child a bucket.
2. Say: "Let's find 3 leaves!" (or 2 rocks, 1 stick).
3. Walk slowly and collect together.
4. End by dumping items in a "nature pile" and looking at them.

Tip: Use "Look, don't pick" for living plants/flowers.

4) Water Paint

Materials: cup/bucket of water, large paintbrushes, sidewalk/fence

Directions:



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1. Show: “Paint with water—watch it disappear!”
 2. Toddlers brush water on concrete or a wooden fence.
 3. Add words: “wet/dry,” “big/small,” “up/down.”
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Older Toddlers (2–3 years)

1) Obstacle Path

Materials: cones or buckets, hula hoops, chalk, a small step or low balance beam (optional)

Directions:

1. Set 3–5 stations: walk around cones, jump in hoop, tiptoe on chalk line, toss beanbag in bucket.
2. Demonstrate once slowly.
3. Send children one at a time or in spaced-out turns.
4. Use short cues: “Around... jump... tiptoe... toss!”

Tip: Keep it short and repeatable. Toddlers love doing the same path again.

2) “Animal Walk” Trail

Materials: none (optional animal picture cards)

Directions:

1. Call an animal: “Walk like a bear!”
2. Move 10 steps, then switch: “Hop like a bunny!”
3. Add “freeze” moments to practice control.



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4. Finish with a slow “turtle walk” to calm.
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3) Ball Ramp Outdoors

Materials: cardboard piece or gutter, a crate/table to prop it, balls

Directions:

1. Prop cardboard to create a ramp.
2. Show: “Roll the ball from the top.”
3. Let children take turns.
4. Ask simple questions: “Fast or slow?” “Which ball goes farther?”

Safety: Keep the landing zone clear so kids aren’t hit in the face.

4) Nature Color Match

Materials: color cards (red/green/brown/yellow) or colored paper squares

Directions:

1. Give each child a card.
 2. Say: “Find something that matches your color!”
 3. Children point or bring a safe item (like a fallen leaf).
 4. Share matches in a circle.
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Preschool (3–5 years)



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1) Nature Scavenger Hunt

Materials: simple picture list (leaf, rock, bug, cloud), clipboard (optional), crayons

Directions:

1. Review the pictures together.
2. Walk and find items; kids check off by drawing a circle or scribble.
3. For living things, practice “look only” and observe gently.
4. End with a sharing circle: “What did you find?”

Extension: Count how many leaves vs. rocks.

2) Shadow Tracing

Materials: sidewalk chalk, a sunny area, toys/leaves/children’s shadows

Directions:

1. Place an object in the sun and trace its shadow.
 2. Return later and trace again.
 3. Compare: “Did it move? Bigger or smaller?”
 4. Kids decorate inside the shadow outline.
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3) Outdoor Story Walk

Materials: picture cards or pages from a familiar story (laminated), tape/clips

Directions:

1. Post pages/cards along a path.



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2. Walk to each “stop,” read the page, and do a motion.
3. Example motions: stomp like the character, tiptoe quietly, roar softly.
4. Finish at the last page and cheer.

4) “Build a Bug Hotel”

Materials: small cardboard box or milk crate, sticks, pinecones, leaves (fallen), paper towel tubes

Directions:

1. Explain: “Some insects like safe places to hide.”
2. Fill the box with sticks/leaves/tubes (no digging, no catching insects).
3. Place it in a quiet corner.
4. Observe from a distance over days/weeks.

Safety: Wash hands after handling nature items. Avoid areas with stinging insects.

School Age (6+)

1) Outdoor Team Challenge: Build a Shelter

Materials: tarp or old sheet, clips/clothespins, rope (adult supervised), sticks, cones

Directions:

1. Set boundaries and safety rules (no climbing trees, no tying around necks).
2. Team's plan: “What do we need: roof, walls, entrance?”
3. Build and test: does it block wind/sun?



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4. Reflect: "What worked? What would you change?"
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2) Nature Journaling

Materials: notebook, pencil, optional magnifier

Directions:

1. Choose a "sit spot" for 5 minutes.
 2. Write/draw: 3 things you see, 2 you hear, 1 you feel.
 3. Add a question: "I wonder..."
 4. Share in pairs.
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3) Outdoor Fitness Stations

Materials: cones, timer

Directions:

1. Set 5 stations: jumping jacks, balance line, hopscotch, sprint to cone, wall sit (short).
 2. Do 30 seconds each, rotate.
 3. End with a cool-down: slow breathing, stretch, water.
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4) Neighborhood Clean-Up + Data

Materials: gloves, trash bags, sanitizer, clipboard

Directions:

1. Review safety: adults handle sharp/unknown items.



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2. Clean for 10–20 minutes with partners.
3. Count types of litter (paper/plastic/other) and make a simple tally chart.
4. Discuss solutions: “How can our community make less trash?”



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