

Sharing Thoughts About Going Outdoors

Dear Families:

Going outdoors gives children an entirely different environment to explore. Outdoors, they can stretch their large muscles, breathe fresh air, take in the sunshine (or the rain or snow), and enjoy the freedom of open space. They can marvel at the creatures they find on the playground, watch the wind blow the trees, and collect seeds and stones. We try to take the children outdoors every day, because we know how important it is for their overall development and learning.

When your child does this...

- crawls through the grass
- climbs over a tree stump
- picks up pinecones to put in a bucket
- rolls a ball to another child

Your child is learning...

- to explore with all senses
- to use gross-motor skills
- to group objects
- social skills

What You Can Do at Home

Here are some activities to try next time you go outdoors with your child. You probably do some of them already. Perhaps others are new ideas.

- **Enjoy nature.** Talk about the breeze touching your cheeks. Roll down a grassy hill together. Plant a garden in your yard, a window box, or in a wheelbarrow that you can move as the sun moves. Take a bucket so your child can collect things such as stones and leaves. Be sure that the items do not present a choking hazard.
- **Take a texture walk.** Call your child's attention to natural materials and describe them. For example, you might point out *soft sand*, *rough pinecones*, and a *smooth rock*.
- **Invent games.** When your child walks well, create a balancing path by laying a piece of rope on the ground to walk along. Play a gentle game of catch. Set up a bowling game in which your child tries to knock down empty food boxes by rolling a beach ball.
- **Visit public playgrounds designed for children under age 3.** Playgrounds with equipment for very young children offer wonderful opportunities for children to practice their developing skills and to begin engaging with other children.
- **Take some "inside" activities outdoors.** For example, you might sit together under a tree and read a book. Give your child a paintbrush and water to paint the side of your house.

By working together, we can introduce your child to the joys and the wonders of the outdoors.

Sincerely,