

Junior Urban Explorers Field Guide



Let's explore and learn about the importance of our parks and open spaces with The Trust for Public Land.





Great parks transform communities. Neighborhoods with great playgrounds, trails and open spaces are friendlier, happier and healthier. Spending time in the outdoors allows us to disconnect from our always-on culture and reconnect with nature—and each other.

While you may not have access to a beach or forest in your neighborhood, urban exploring can be done anywhere if you open your eyes and step outside into the fresh air. Here are some fun and engaging activities that instill respect and love for the outdoors through exploration of your local parks, open spaces and even the sidewalks between.

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Note: These activities are designed for kids ages 2–5, but can be modified for younger and older kids.



Map your neighborhood!

Activity 1

Learn how to read and draw a map to help build spatial reasoning skills and inspire exploration.

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY



30–40
mins.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Required by adult:



Level of prep required:



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Existing maps
(road or physical/topographical)

Paper

Crayons and/or colored pencils

WHAT YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING:

- Instills spatial reasoning skills and visualization of where objects are in relation to one another
 - Early intro to directions, orienteering and wayfinding
- Develops critical thinking, considerations about distances, directions, scale, proportion and perspective
 - Inspires exploration!



Activity steps on next page.



What you do:

1

Explore existing street or topographic maps for an introduction to the world of wayfinding, tracing lines to discover routes between locations.

2

Grab some paper and crayons and draw maps of familiar places, such as rooms in your house, your backyard, your block or neighborhood park.

3

Take a walk around the space you are mapping, looking for landmarks to include.

4

Use shapes to signify and label the objects you want to include in your map, such as furniture or playground equipment.

5

As you explore with your map, anticipate where you need to go next. Ask questions such as:

“Which way do we turn at the corner? Right or left?” or “How many blocks away is the park?”

6

Have an adult or big kid adventure buddy hide an object and point to its location on your map, offering clues to help you find your treasure!

As your kiddos get more comfortable with map exploration, have them map imaginary worlds or of places from their favorite books.

7

Have an adult snap a photo of your map creation and post on social media using #growXtogether.





Activity 2

Local Nature Hike

Whether you live in a big city or a small town, step outside and explore nature in your local park or neighborhood.

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY



30 mins.–
1 hour

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Required by adult:



Level of prep required:



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Your eyes and your ears!

Paper or a notebook

Pencil or crayon

WHAT YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING:

- Appreciation of nature and what types of trees, plants, flowers, birds and animals are native to your community
 - How to observe and learn about nature
- Vocabulary words related to trees, parks, plants and nature



Activity steps on next page.



What you do:

Choose a nearby open natural space for your hike
(think: local park, nature trail or the streets of your own neighborhood).

? Questions to ask along your walk:

Do you see nature around you?

How many different kinds of trees or plants do you see?

What do the plants feel like? Are they soft, pokey or rough?

Do you see any flowers? What color(s) are they?

Do you see any animals or birds?

What do you hear?

What does the sky look like?

Is there a playground? What else do you see?

Are there other people enjoying nature?
How many can you count?

What is your favorite way to enjoy the outdoors?





Activity 2

Observation log:

Have an adult or big kid adventure buddy help you write down your observations in the log below:

A series of horizontal dashed lines providing space for writing observations.





Activity 3

Create a picture of a park

Get creative and use your imagination to create pictures inspired by the parks and open spaces in your neighborhood.

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY



10–15
mins.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Required by adult:



Level of prep required:



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Crayons, markers or
colored pencils

Printed worksheet (see next page)
or blank paper

WHAT YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING:

- Creativity! How to create art that represents places of outdoor play
 - Using color to create shapes and objects
 - Fine motor skills



Activity steps on next page.



What you do: Create!

1

Have an adult or big kid adventure buddy print or trace the park scene coloring sheet to get colorful and creative.

2

Older children can draw a picture of a park they see on a separate piece of paper.



Parks and open spaces vocabulary words:



PARK

MAP

FLOWER

FIELD

SQUIRREL

CLOUDS

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*These activities were created in partnership with
KinderCare Education and The Trust for Public Land.*

The Trust for Public Land doesn't just save land—they save land for people to enjoy, from neighborhood parks to national parks.

Their mission is to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

Every park, playground and public space they help create is an open invitation for everyone to explore, wonder, discover and play.

They have been connecting communities to the outdoors—and to each other—since 1972. Today, millions of Americans live within a 10-minute walk of a park or natural area they've helped create and countless more visit every year.

Visit [TPL.org](https://www.tpl.org) for more information.

Congratulations,

you've completed the Junior Urban Explorers Field Guide!

Print or trace and cut out the Grow Together Trust for Public Land badge to honor your achievement.



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