



a tipsheet for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 2

Backyard Babies

10 Ways to Explore Nature with Infants and Toddlers

Young children are inquisitive and intrinsically motivated to explore. The great outdoors is an environment that, by itself, provides limitless opportunities for exploration. Sand, water, rocks, leaves, and bugs are just a few examples* of items in nature that spark curiosity and encourage exploration.

Children rely on adults to provide them with the opportunity to experience nature. Adults can enjoy being outside with children as an opportunity to play with children, or relax and daydream together. Think about the days when children rolled down hills, made mud pies, and danced in the rain. These types of exciting sensory experiences aid in many areas of a child's development. Adults have the responsibility to help children gain a deep respect for nature while providing a safe and healthy child friendly environment.

So, let's kick off our shoes and get dirty:

1. Dig in the dirt with hands, shovels, spoons, etc.
2. Add water to dirt and make mud pies
3. Make mud bricks with ice cube trays
4. Rock play: use as blocks, paint with water, talk about textures, colors, sizes
5. Play with leaves, make piles and rubbings, sort
6. Watch worms and bugs, see where they live
7. Examine different plant life: talk about the flowers, grass, trees
8. Hang a bird feeder and watch the birds eat or set up a bird bath to watch
9. Have a picnic lunch or snack outside
10. Plant vegetables and flowers with older toddlers

Through these examples, children can learn how to be part of and responsibly care for the world around them.

Dirt, water, plants, and small animals attract and hold children's attention for hours, days, even a lifetime



** proper adult supervision is required when allowing young children to explore the outdoors*

Region 4 Infant Toddler Technical Assistance Center Partners



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Child Care Council of Columbia & Greene Counties



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Adirondack Community Action Program, Inc.



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