



# Start a Nature Collection!



**Learning Goals:** To help your child observe and appreciate the natural world in their community. To help your child categorize, and share findings with others.

## What You Need:

- Woodsy area, or beach
- Sealable plastic bag (gallon size works best)
- Permanent marker (to label the bags)
- Kitchen size garbage bag (for any trash found on the way)
- Old shoe boxes
- Glass jars (recycled, if possible)
- Camera (optional)

## What to Do:

1. **PREPARATION:** In a local park or nearby beach, find 4 or 5 examples of small natural objects that children might find on a nature hike, such as an interesting rock, a colorful leaf, a piece of bark, a pinecone, and so on.
2. Show your child the nature objects from Step 1, and ask them where they think you found them all. Ask them to think of what other things they might find in this area.
3. Go outside to a woodsy area, such as local park or nature preserve. A beach is also a great place to collect. Hand a plastic bag to your child with their name on it (permanent markers work well for labeling), and explain that they will have their chance to start their own nature collection. Explore the area for at least 30 minutes, and tell them to collect anything they find on the ground: leaves, rocks, twigs, acorns, pinecones, feathers, pieces of dead tree bark, shells, exoskeletons of dead bugs.
4. At school or at home, have the child put their nature collections into a shoe box (which you can call a "Nature Treasure Box"), or glass jars, and have them organize the objects by category. If you are working with a group of children, you might, for example, have one glass jar that contains one "amazing rock" from each child. You could write the date on a piece of paper and tape it to the jar, as a reminder of when you found these objects. Children can start their own "natural history" museums, which they can present to other children and family members.

## Extensions:

While in the woods, your child can create impromptu nature art. Explain that this sort of art is made of natural materials such as rocks, leaves, sticks, mud, and so on. You can take a picture of these art projects if you wish but tell your child to leave them in the woods, much as they leave sandcastles on the beach.