

Nature & Outdoor List

Get outside without a plan

STILL DAD

BACKYARD (OR ANY OUTDOOR SPACE)

- Set up a sprinkler and let them run through it
- Build a bug hotel out of sticks, leaves, and bark
- Look for bugs under rocks and logs: identify them if possible
- Plant something in a pot and track its growth
- Make a mud kitchen with old pots and spoons
- Lay in the grass and find shapes in clouds
- Watch for birds and try to identify three different ones
- Set up a target and throw things at it (rocks, pinecones, beanbags)

NEIGHBORHOOD WALKS

Walking Games

- Count all red cars, blue doors, or cats you can find
- "I Spy" the whole walk: they pick what others have to find
- Step on every crack (or avoid every crack)
- Pick a direction at every corner based on a coin flip
- Find something that starts with every letter of the alphabet

Scavenger Hunts

- Something soft, something rough, something yellow, something round
- A bird feather, a seed pod, a piece of bark, a smooth stone
- Something people threw away, something that grew naturally

You don't need a destination. You need to be outside with them. Twenty minutes at a park beats forty minutes trying to find the perfect activity online.

NATURE ACTIVITIES BY SEASON

Spring

- Find and identify three wildflowers
- Watch for robins or returning birds
- Collect rain in a jar and measure it
- Find where the bees are going

Summer

- Catch fireflies at dusk and release them
- Find and identify animal tracks near water
- Watch a sunset and name the colors
- Stargazing: learn three constellations

LOCAL PARKS

- Explore a trail you've never taken before
- Find and cross every bridge in the park
- Collect 10 different leaves and compare their shapes at home
- Skip stones on any water you find
- Find the highest point in the park and stand on it
- Bring binoculars and see what wildlife you can spot
- Bring lunch and eat outside: makes the ordinary feel like an expedition
- Look for geocaches if there are any nearby (free app, actual treasure)

Fall

- Jump in a pile of raked leaves (rake the leaves first)
- Collect acorns, pinecones, and interesting seed pods
- Find the best-colored tree and take a photo under it
- Watch geese flying south and count the formation

Winter

- Look for animal tracks in snow or mud
- Make a snow fort or snowman
- Try to catch snowflakes on dark paper and see the shapes
- Find which birds stay through winter and identify them

WHAT TO KEEP IN THE CAR: SPONTANEOUS OUTDOOR KIT

- Sunscreen and bug spray
- Water bottle for each person
- Snack bars or trail mix
- Old shoes or boots for muddy conditions
- A small first aid kit
- A plastic bag for collecting things
- Cheap magnifying glass
- Change of clothes for younger kids