



Leaf identification

This activity encourages learners to look closely and start to identify the similarities and differences of trees found in their outdoor space. They will ask questions and ‘really look’ to try and find the tree the leaf came from. This also introduces the concept of identifying plants in their site, by exploring the space and making observations.

Learners will be given a leaf from their site, and they will need to look closely at the size, colour, texture, and smell to help them find their ‘leaf partner’, who has the same leaf as them. Encourage them to also take close notice of the edges of the leaves – are they smooth or spiky? They will need to use nature vocabulary to describe their leaf.

Once they have found their ‘leaf partner’, the learners will then explore the space to try and find the tree that their leaf came from.

Teaching time

15–20 minutes

Learning outcomes

- Make close observations of nature with reference to colours and textures and noticing similarities and difference between features
- Look carefully at nature in school or local green spaces and begin to recognise and name common plants and animals
- Begin to recognise some features of local trees and other plants that can be used to group them together

Step by step

To prepare before the activity, collect two or more leaves from trees in your outdoor area, or from the ground. Each learner will need one leaf. Try to collect pairs from a variety of tree species – pine needles, big leaves, different shapes and colours, etc.

Distribute the leaf pairs you have collected to the group, so that everyone has one leaf each.

Ask learners to talk to each other and compare their leaves, discussing the shape, size, edge and colour. They will need to find the person with the same leaf as them.

Note: Remember that some learners may have a leaf from the same tree, but one might be bigger/smaller due to the age of the leaf – can they still find their leaf partner?

Once they have found their ‘leaf partner’, ask the learners to walk around the outdoor space and try to find the tree that their leaf came from.

Reflection

Facilitate a discussion to further understand the trees in your learning site: “How many different species of tree does our site have?” “If we did this activity in another season, what would be different?”

Green Skills



Suitable for

Early Years
Key Stage 1
Key Stage 2

Location

Outdoors

Season

Spring
Summer
Autum
Winter

What you’ll need

Leaves from trees on your site

Key vocabulary

Leaf
Texture
Senses
Looking closely

Support and extension opportunities

Learners could then try and draw their leaves or use a pencil or crayon to rub the texture onto a piece of paper – what do they notice? What patterns or textures are created?

This activity could be repeated using photos of flowers or plants, asking learners to match the flower to a plant in your learning site.

Learners can be asked to wite or act out a story about their leaf – its journey on the tree, and what other plants or animals it might have encountered.

In autumn, learners can collect leaves from the ground and make leaf and stick piles for insects.



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