



Sound mapping

Have you ever thought of all the different creatures that live around us? We can't always see them but if we are really quiet, we may hear them. This activity provides an introduction to getting to know a space through a creative form of 'mapping' and connecting to nature through the senses.

This activity encourages children and young people to use their sense of hearing to make a sound map of an outdoor space, taking notice of what they can hear and where it is coming from.

Teaching time

15–20 minutes

Learning outcomes

- Use their sense of hearing to tune into and explore the natural world taking notice of the diversity of sounds within their immediate surroundings
- Spend time outdoors in nature and share how they feel when interacting with nature
- Record and interpret observations (using simple language, drawings, diagrams, basic maps, keys, bar charts and tables)
- Record where things are spatially in relation to one another

Step by step

Before heading outside, start with a simple exercise to introduce the idea of mark making: What would a loud sound look like on paper? How could you show a quiet sound? What would a long, rhythmic sound look like? Or a short sound? How can the pressure of a pencil, or different lines and shapes communicate different sounds?

Gather your class outside, choose a space to sit down or stand quietly with your paper and pencils. Take a moment to listen to the sounds you can hear. If we are all very quiet we might be able to hear creatures outside – birds in the trees, or insects nearby. Even plants make sounds – their leaves moving in the wind. Listen out for people and human-made sounds too.

Draw yourself in the middle of your map. Then start to draw the sounds you can hear and what direction you think they are coming from around you.

To help you focus, try closing your eyes, or covering one ear and then the other. Do you notice different sounds if you turn your head left or right, up or down?

You could draw pictures of what you think the sounds might be – trees, grass, insects or birds, or cars on the road. Or you could make different symbols or patterns for each sound – does it sound loud and hard, or quiet and soft? Does it have a rhythm, does it start and stop, or continue?

Green Skills



Suitable for

Early Years
Key Stage 1
Key Stage 2
Key Stage 3
Key Stage 4

Location

Outdoors

Season

Spring
Summer
Autum
Winter

What you'll need

Plain sheets of paper
Clipboards
Pencils

Key vocabulary

Record
Map
Senses

Support and extension opportunities

Depending on age and learning style, this activity could vary in length – some younger learners may enjoy up to five minutes of focused mapping, whereas older groups could create a more detailed map and spend longer on the task.

To cater for different access needs, learners could work in with a buddy to listen and describe sounds to the other, thinking about how they would communicate what they can hear.



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Step by step (continued)

To round up, open a discussion about what sounds were heard – create a tally or map back in the classroom of how dominant different sounds were - e.g. cars, a plane, birds, leaves, people, etc. Were there more natural sounds or human-made sounds noticed? Were there certain areas or directions where different sounds were heard? What does this tell us about our site?

Reflection

How did different sounds make you feel? (calm, happy, irritated, curious?)
Did you notice any sounds you liked or disliked? Were there certain areas of your site that you heard more enjoyable sounds than others?



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