

ENCOURAGING THINKING THROUGH OUTDOOR PLAY

Play is the work of children. As adults, we often see play as leisure, but through a child's eyes, play is serious business and a rich opportunity to engage in critical and creative thinking. Outdoor play provides wonderful ways for children to use their imagination.

CREATE A VILLAGE OF NATURAL MATERIALS

When your child goes out to play, encourage them to build a miniature village using natural items they can find such as stones, sticks, leaves or bark that has fallen off trees. Remind your child to include roads, bridges, rivers, homes, stores, and any other buildings important for a village. When their miniature village is finished, ask them to explain the various structures they created and why they feel they are important for the village.

SEE YOURSELF THROUGH AN ANIMAL'S EYES

Before your child goes outside to play, talk about the animals that live in your area such as ladybugs, mosquitoes, snails, snakes, foxes, and squirrels. Suggest that when they are outside they look for clues to determine if any of the animals on the list live in your yard. Encourage the child to choose one of the animals that may have been watching them in the yard and to create a story from the perspective of that animal. Ask them to think about what the animal may have observed about them as they played.

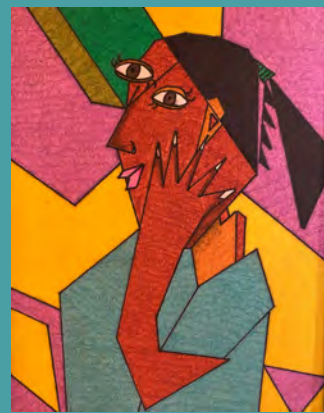
LEARN FROM OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

Suggest to your child that when they play outside, they build a bird nest using items they can find in the yard. If you are able to observe a nest from a distance, notice that the nest is strong, water proof, soft and comfortable for a baby bird. Encourage the child to use twigs, string, cloth, or other items that they can find.



FIND YOUR INNER PICASSO

Provide your child with a bucket of sidewalk chalk. Before going outside, show them a few of Picasso's paintings. Ask them to use the sidewalk chalk to create either portraits of family members or a series of pictures that tell a story using only circles, rectangles, and triangles.



BE A BACKYARD ARCHAEOLOGIST

Ask your child to see if they can find an interesting object that someone has left behind. Remind the child not to touch the item but to examine it closely where it is found. Ask your child to tell the story of the object. Encourage them to think about what the object might have been used for. How did it come to be there? If someone from the future found the object, what would it tell them about the people who created and used the object?

YOUR BACKYARD SONG

Encourage your child to go outside, close their eyes, and listen to the sounds of the outdoors. Ask if they can identify which are natural sounds and which are not. Are there any patterns they can hear? If the sounds of their backyard were a song, would it be a joyful song? A sad song? A rock and roll song? What title would you give your backyard song?

