

Off the beaten track

Sometimes the *best* adventures happen when you make your own path. Next time you play in the woods, go exploring and see where your feet lead you. You might make an amazing discovery no-one else has found!

Look up high and down low

Crane your neck and look up into the tree canopy. Crouch on the ground and take a closer look at what's under your feet. What do you see?

Follow your nose

Sniff things – lichen on branches, wet leaves, flowers and bare earth.

Chase a sound

Close your eyes, stand still and listen carefully. What can you hear?

Creep and crawl

Peer under bushes, peep into tree roots, crawl through long grass and lie on the ground to see the woods from a bug's perspective.

Take a breather

Stop and sit still for five minutes. What new things do you see, hear, smell and feel?

More FREE activity booklets and outdoor ideas at:

naturedetectives.org.uk



Discover



Woodland adventure booklet



This booklet was made by staff at the Woodland Trust and Westonbirt Arboretum

The Woodland Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales (294344) and Scotland (SC038886) at Kempton Way, Grantham, NG31 6LL

Images: Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission photo libraries, iStockphoto, Wikimedia Commons. Illustrations by David Hallewell.

Leaf challenge

Find as many different fallen leaves as you can, then sort them into different piles – colour, size, shape... Can you think of any other categories?

COLOUR



SIZE



SHAPE



Challenge friends and family to a leaf hunting competition – who can find the most orange leaves, star-shaped leaves, heart-shaped leaves...?

Whose poo?

Can you tell what animals live in or around the woods by their poo?

Badger



Look out for poo in shallow pits called 'latrines' (a badger toilet). It's sloppy if they've been eating lots of worms, firm and sausage-like if they've had other foods.

Fox



Fox poo looks a bit like dog poo. It's often a bit pointy at one end. Look out for fur in the poo, as well as feathers, tiny bones, seeds and berries.

Rabbit and hare



Look out for piles of little round balls of poo. Rabbits and hares eat a lot of grass, so their poo is made up of fibres. It's usually yellowy-brown or green.

Deer



Look for piles of shiny, dark, pellets, a bit pointy at one end. Deer 'ruminates' – this means they regurgitate their food and chew it twice before full digestion, so their poo is very smooth and doesn't have lots of bits in it.

Otter



Otter poo is also called spraint. It usually contains fish bones, as well as feathers, seeds and berries. Find it near water where they live, often in the open on rocks and the riverbank.

Dog



Dogs often go for walks in the woods and their poo is sometimes left behind by careless owners. It has a very strong, nasty smell and comes in all shades of brown. Never touch dog poo, it contains nasty bugs that could make you ill.

Remember, never touch poo with your hands as it can contain nasty germs which could make you ill. If you want a closer look to see if the poo you find contains bones or fur, poke it with a stick instead to break it apart.

Photos: WTPL Badger: Wikimedia Commons Fox: Dominicus Johannes Bergsma, Rabbit: Tom Meijer, Deer: Ejzzej, Otter: David Perez, iStockphoto Dog: Alistair McCaskill.

Animal homes



Badger sett

Large, badger sized tunnels, often dug into slopes



Rabbit warren

Small rabbit-sized tunnels



Mouse burrow

Tiny mouse-sized tunnels, the size of a 50p coin



Mole hill

Piles of soil pushed up out of the ground



Squirrel drey

Often built with twigs and leaves, next to a tree trunk



Bat roost

Look out for a tell-tale black streak. This is pool!



Tree hollow

Home to tawny owls and little owls



Bird nest

Made with twigs, grass, moss and leaves.



Woodpecker hole

Made by woodpeckers drilling with their beaks



Oak galls

Home to the larvae of the gall wasp



Spider web

Look out for orb, funnel and sheet webs



Deadwood

Home to woodlice, stag beetles and millipedes

Teddy, the great explorer

Find a teddy bear who likes exploring (it should be one you don't mind getting a bit grubby).

Tie a long bit of string to your teddy and take him or her for a walk through some grassy woodland glades. Let your teddy explore the long grass and pretty wildflowers.

After your walk, have a look at your teddy bear's fur. Are there any seeds stuck on it?

Lots of wildflowers spread their seeds this way, although normally they would stick to animals like foxes and rabbits, not teddies!

Take the seeds from your teddy's fur and drop them onto a patch of soil. Make sure the spot gets plenty of sunlight and rain so the seeds will grow.

You and teddy have helped a seed to travel and new wildflowers to grow, well done!



Seed helicopters

Some trees and plants use the wind to spread their seeds. Their seeds are specially adapted to float about on the breeze. Organise an experiment in the woods, to see which tree seeds fly the furthest.

Collect sticks and some winged seeds that have fallen from the trees. Field maple, sycamore and ash trees all have winged seeds.

Find a space underneath a tree with leaf litter on the ground. Clear the leaf litter so you have a large circle of bare earth – this is where you'll hold your flight tests.

Put a large stick into the soil to mark the middle of your circle.

Stand in the middle of the circle and throw or drop a seed into the air. How far does it travel? Mark its landing place with another stick.

Keep test flying seeds to find out which one travels the furthest. You can measure how far they travel from the centre of the circle by using a measuring tape or paces.



Winged seeds are sometimes known as helicopter seeds because they fly and spin through the air!

Be a plant hunter

Hundreds of years ago, people sailed across the world in ships to explore different countries for the first time.

They brought back news of exciting plants that people in Britain had never seen before.

Pretend you're a plant hunter and the woodland is a new land that you're exploring for the first time.

Plant hunters made up names for the trees and plants they discovered. Look around. Are there any trees or plants you don't recognise? Give them names to help you remember them.



Map out the area you explore so you and other plant hunters can find it again. Draw a map and label it with paths, trees, plants and recognisable landmarks.

Collect samples to take home and show people who weren't lucky enough to come on your expedition. Modern plant hunters collect fallen seeds and label them in paper bags.

Download and make the seed collecting bag from the nature detectives website. www.naturedetectives.org.uk/download/trees



Listen like a deer

Deer have excellent hearing. Learn how to listen just like a deer.

Stand very still and close your eyes so you aren't distracted.

Deer have much bigger ears than us and this helps them to hear more sound.

To make your ears bigger, cup your hands behind them.

Deer and rabbits can swivel their ears so that they can listen to what's going on behind them without moving. Human ears don't swivel but try putting your hands in front of your ears with your palms facing behind.

Stop, wait and listen. What woodland noises can you hear?

Can you hear better when you make your ears bigger and swivel them?



Find, show and tell

A fun 'show and tell' game to play with your friends and family.

Choose an area of woodland to explore and decide on a meeting spot. Challenge everyone to look for the most amazing thing you can find in 5 minutes. What will you discover? Deer antlers, a hollow tree big enough to hide in, a secret waterfall...?

Don't forget to set your stopwatch.

Meet back up and take it in turns to hear about, or go and see, each other's discoveries.

If your friends keep choosing the same things as you, give everyone a different piece of coloured ribbon tied on a stick to mark the item they have chosen. (This is also useful for finding your amazing discovery again when you show everyone.)

You can turn this into a scavenger hunt competition too, by challenging everyone to find certain objects and bring them back to the meeting spot. A feather, a star-shaped leaf, something smooth, a daisy petal...

The first person to find each item and bring it to the meeting spot wins the points!



Nature table

A nature table is a space to display treasures you find on your woodland adventures. It's great for sharing exciting discoveries with your friends and family.



Make one at home or at school. If you don't have space for a table, you could have a nature shelf, or even a nature bowl!

Collect interesting things that have fallen to the woodland floor – special sticks, lucky leaves, delicate snail shells, unusual feathers...

If you can identify your treasures, make labels for them to tell other people what they are.

If you don't know, be a **nature detective** – look them up in wildlife books or on the internet, or ask your parents or teachers.

If you still don't know, or you just like making up stories, think of weird and wacky names for your items and tell imaginative tales about them instead!



Make up wacky stories about your treasures

Minibeast safari

A safari is when you travel on an adventure to see animals in their natural surroundings.

Before you head out exploring, make a telescope or some binoculars from old kitchen roll tubes, or rolled up paper. Now you're ready to go spotting.

Remember that explorers always travel quietly and carefully, so they don't disturb the wildlife they're trying to watch and so they get to see as many creatures as possible.

Here are some good places to hunt for bugs:

Peep under logs

Find slow slugs and brave beetles, speedy centipedes and wiggly worms.

Keep watch over wildflowers

Look for busy bumblebees and beautiful butterflies collecting nectar and pollen.

Lie in the grass

Feel it tickle your face while you look for ambitious ants and chirpy crickets.

As a safari adventurer you need to watch these creatures carefully to see what they are doing and how they behave. Are they eating, hiding, collecting, climbing, flying, jumping, chasing...?

