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Discovering nature

As she skips down the sidewalk after a rain, your youngster nearly steps on a slinky, pink earthworm. Bending down to investigate, she asks, "Where are his ears?"

Your first reaction may be one of disgust, "Don't touch that!" Or you might feel embarrassed about being unable to answer her question.

But you're pleased at her inquisitiveness and want to encourage her desire to learn.

The way you deal with a child's explorations will shape her feelings about the natural world. Your reactions can tell her that nature is something to fear and avoid, or that it is a source of endless interest and excitement.

What can you do to foster a child's innate curiosity about nature?

How can you rediscover your own sense of wonder and share it?

LOOK

In this instance, you say, "I don't know if earthworms have ears-let's have a look" Bend down together and spend some time observing in silence.

Your child's original question might go unanswered, but she might notice that one end of the worm's body is more pointed than the other and other's a think "belt" around its middle.

TOUCH

If your child wants to pick up the worm, encourage her to be gentle and ask, "What does it feel like when he crawls on your hand?"

Instead of leaving the worm on the sidewalk, suggest that she find a safe place for it in a nearby lawn or garden.

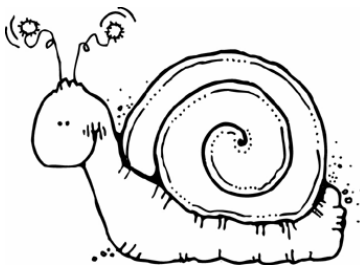
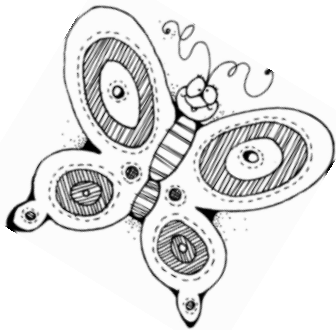
PRETEND

Later at home, you can encourage your child to wiggle across the floor like a worm, or make some earthworms in play dough.

READ

If you're still wondering whether or not earthworms have ears, you may want to visit your local library together to find a book that will help you both with answers.

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These activities are not a test to see whether your child knows the skills. If your child has trouble, give enough hints so that he or she can be successful. If the activity is too difficult or becomes frustrating, stop that activity and do something else that is fun. The main goal is to spend quality time with your child each day and to help your child be successful!

1 Rainy Ideas

◆ Make rain pictures

Start out by painting some shapes with water colors or water soluble markers. Set the picture in the rain and see what it does.

◆ Make a rainbow indoors.

Fill a glass with water (make sure it is full to the top) and set it on a windowsill in the bright sunlight. It should project over the inside ledge just a bit. Put a white sheet of paper on the floor beneath the window, and a rainbow will magically appear on the paper.

3 Birds

- ◆ Make a bird feeder by rolling a pine cone in peanut butter and then in bird seeds.
- ◆ Watch to see which birds like your seeds.
- ◆ Walk and look for nests and birds. Look for colors and sizes (same and different).
- ◆ Now is a good time to hang the hummingbird feeders.
- ◆ Read stories with bird such as the traditional stories: Little Red Hen or The Ugly Duckling.
- ◆ Other book suggestions:
 - Five Little Ducks by Papparone
 - Have you seen My Duckling by Tafuri
 - 10 Little Rubber Ducks by Carle

2 Animals

◆ Visit the zoo

Rather than wearing yourself out visiting the whole zoo, you can concentrate on specific areas of interest to you. Ask if there are any new babies on display. If you are interested in what animals eat, find out when they are fed and if you can watch.

◆ Visit a Working Farm

See if you can help feed the animals. Petting animals or going for cart or wagon rides makes it memorable.

4 Plants

- ◆ Go for a walk and collect leaves, twigs, and other small natural items. Arrange them on a page and glue them in place.
- ◆ Leaves and flowers can be pressed and dried between magazine or catalog pages. They can be used to make a collage also.
- ◆ To make a rub with leaves, place them vein side up. Place your paper over the leaves, and rub the paper with crayon.
- ◆ If you garden, think about starting some seeds inside. Sunflowers and marigolds seem to have a good success rate for beginners. Or start a seed in a glass bottle. Place the seed by the outside of the bottle so you can watch the seed grow. Green beans work nicely to watch grow in the bottle.

Please take a moment each month to fill out the brief questionnaire that we have included. We would like to know how helpful (or not) these newsletters have been for you, and how we can improve them for future years.

Please complete and return to your preschool teacher.

May 2007 Newsletter:

The information in this newsletter was (check one):

Informative. The right amount of information

Too brief

Too long

Not helpful

Other: _____

The activities were:

Helpful Activities you liked best (which numbers) _____

Not useful Activities you like least _____

The right amount of activities?

Comments: _____
