

EXPLORING LICHEN

Preparation and Engagement Guidance

Lichen is very common throughout the world—and often overlooked. However, once people notice it, their curiosity is spiked! It is an extremely interesting living thing and looking at lichen through a magnifier is an experience not to be missed. It can be like looking at plants from an extraterrestrial planet or like snorkeling through coral reefs. This activity walks learners through finding different shapes, colors, and kinds of lichen as well as learning about how lichen grows.

Target audience: This activity is best for learners 6-years-old and older, or younger learners with adult support.

Materials

- a printed copy of this document to refer to during the activity
- appropriate number of *Exploring Lichen* flip card decks for your organization (depending on how many learners you expect to use them)
- 1–2 small branches with lichen on them
- 2–3 magnifiers for the table (more if you are offering them to learners to borrow while they explore)
- (optional) 1 printed activity sign
- (optional) 1 clear plexiglass menu stand to display the activity sign

Preparation

If this is your first time using Flip Cards, review *Flip Card Activities: Background Information* for more information on preparation, materials to support learners, and engagement guidance. The following steps are our recommendations and should be customized for your site and program.

1. Print sets of the Flip Card activity.
 - a. We recommend printing on cardstock and/or laminating for ongoing use.
 - b. Print each card in color, single-sided, actual size.
 - c. Cut each individual card to the 4" x 6" trim size. (Use the inner set of crop marks as your guide.)
 - d. Hole punch the circle in the top-left corner of each card.
 - e. Use a book binder ring ($\frac{1}{2}$ " to 1") to collate each card deck.
2. Try out this activity yourself! Your experience using this flip card deck in the space in which learners will use it will help you share specific examples and point learners to interesting things to look at.
 - a. Take note of where there is lichen to find in your nature area so you can direct visitors toward those areas.
3. Review and customize the Engagement Guidance (on the next page). Think about your space, your audience, the time you will have with learners, and how you might want to best engage them.
4. Gather 1–2 small branches with lichen on them to engage learners. Too many samples can be overwhelming. Don't include every type of lichen that's in your outdoor nature area. Just get visitors interested and then let them discover more lichen in the area.
5. On the day you will be sharing this flip card deck with learners:
 - a. (optional) Decide if you need to add more lichen to your outdoor nature area—for instance, branches that you've gathered with samples of lichen on them. If so, be sure to double-check with a site director that this is okay and gather additional lichen samples from nearby to make sure the species are native to your area. Place new lichen samples in your outdoor area in a way that looks natural.
 - b. (optional) Place the large activity sign on the menu stand on the table. (The activity sign is a large version of the first card in the deck.)
 - c. Place sets of the Flip Card activity on the table. If you're not using the large activity sign, place the first card of each set facing up. If you are using the large activity sign, place the second card of each set facing up.
 - d. Place the lichen samples and the magnifiers on the table near the flip card decks.

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Preparation and Engagement Guidance (continued)

Engagement Guidance

Here is an example of how you might engage learners at the beginning of their experience when they first show interest in an activity, as well as after they complete the activity. The first time you use the *Exploring Lichen* activity, we recommend trying out some of the suggested language (in italics, below) and then customizing it.

At the beginning:

- Point to the lichen samples on the table and offer:
 - *Check out these lichen through a magnifier. Isn't that cool! What does it remind you of?*
- Listen to all observations.
- Share what you notice: *It reminds me of . . . !* (e.g., exploring a forest on another planet, coral reefs).
- *These living things are fairly common, and they're really interesting, but most people don't know much about them.*
- Offer:
 - *If you want, take this set of cards with you into the outdoor nature area. The cards will guide you to explore and learn about this cool organism.*
 - (if applicable) *We highly recommend taking a magnifier with you!*

At the end:

- *What did you discover?*
- *Do you have a photo of lichen to share? What do you find interesting about that lichen? What do you find interesting about any other lichen you found?*
- *Which different kinds of lichen did you find?*
- *Where else do you think you could find lichen to observe?*
- Ask some reflective questions, such as:
 - *What is something interesting about lichen that you learned?*
 - *Did anything surprise you during this activity?*

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Card

Citation

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