

EXPLORING NATURE JOURNALING

Preparation and Engagement Guidance

Nature journaling is a powerful practice used by professional scientists and naturalists, as well as hobbyists and students. Nature journaling supports observation, thinking, and learning; it is a quickly spreading practice that's used to notice and record observations, questions, connections, and possible explanations for things found in nature. When nature journaling, the goal is to collect as much data as possible through words and drawings—not to make a pretty picture! To increase interest and use, consider offering this activity on a day advertised to the public for nature journaling.

Target audience: This activity is best for learners 9-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 Nature Journaling* flip card decks for your organization (depending on how many learners you expect to use them)
- 3–5 nature journal sample pages (see Prep Step 5)
- nature journaling materials for visitors to borrow:
 - pencils
 - clipboards with paper and/or journals
 - (optional) 2–3 magnifiers
 - (optional) colored pencils
 - (optional) watercolors and paintbrushes
- (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. Decide whether to include an optional card.
 - a. Card 14b is optional in this deck. Include it if you'd like to encourage learners to share their work online. You might want to consider non-digital options, too, such as a bulletin board or a physical display space.
2. 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.
3. Try out this activity yourself! Your experience using this flip card deck in the space in which learners will use them will help you share specific examples and point learners to interesting things to look at.
4. 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.
5. Choose 3–5 journal pages to display as compelling examples.
 - a. You can print from: <https://beetlesproject.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/1.-Model-Field-Journal-Pages.pdf> or use examples from learners at your organization.
 - b. Try to choose a range of different kinds of journal pages, from simple to more complex, so learners don't feel intimidated or feel like they need to create something on par with a professional scientist!
6. Consider if you want to create a space for learners to share their nature journal pages. You can take photos of learners' pages to share digitally or to print and add to a bulletin board.
7. On the day you will be sharing this flip card deck with learners:
 - a. (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.)
 - b. 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.
 - c. Place the nature journal sample pages 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 Nature Journaling* activity, we recommend trying out some of the suggested language (in italics, below) and then customizing it.

At the beginning:

- *Do you want to check out these nature journal sample pages?*
 - Give learners a few minutes to check out the sample pages.
- *Lots of people, including scientists, nature journal to explore nature and record what they notice by using words, pictures, and numbers together on the page. It's a form of collecting data, not about drawing a pretty picture.*
- *Many people find that when they nature journal, they observe things they would not have otherwise noticed and remember their experiences better.*
- *If you'd like to try exploring nature journaling, follow the directions on this card deck; it will guide you through a step-by-step process of nature journaling.*
- *Feel free to take a magnifier with you so you can get an even closer look at what you decide to draw.*

At the end:

- *What did you discover? Can I see your journal page?*
 - If they show you, avoid commenting on whether or not journal pages are pretty, because it sends the message that artistic ability is valued rather than making accurate observations.
 - The activity asks visitors to make focused observations and record information by using words, pictures, and numbers. Comment on those aspects of a learner's work when you give feedback.
 - When you give feedback, emphasize different types of observations that learners have made and different strategies for recording information that learners have used. Do this in a nonjudgmental, yet specific, way.
 - For example, instead of saying, "You made great observations in your journal," you might say,
 - *"Wow, I can see that you used three different strategies for recording your observations. You made a drawing, you labeled it with words and arrows, and you wrote descriptive sentences."*
 - *"I notice that you really captured the shape of the leaf."*
 - *"I notice how much detail you captured about the fruit."*
 - *"I notice you were so careful in how you added color."*
- Ask some reflective questions, such as:
 - *What did you learn about nature journaling?*
 - *What else would you like to nature journal about?*

Additional Resources

Introduction to Nature Journaling Zine: Your Quick Start Guide to Nature Journaling:

<https://www.wildwonder.org/store/p/nj-zine>

How to Teach Nature Journaling: Curiosity, Wonder, Attention by John Muir Laws and Emilie Lygren:

<https://wildwonder.org/teach>

How to Teach Nature Journaling: Adjusting Activities for Younger Students:

<https://www.wildwonder.org/educator-support-adjusting-activities-for-younger-students>

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Photograph and Illustration Credits

Card

Citation

All illustrations by Kate Rutter.

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| 1 | “Person journaling” photo by Doug Robichaud on Unsplash ; Illustration in notebook by Paige, workshop participant, age 9. |
| 6 | “Yellow spotted leaf” photo by Srinivas Reddy on Unsplash ; “Hands tracing leaf” photo and “Sketch of leaf” photo by Kevin Beals courtesy of the University of California at Berkeley and The Lawrence Hall of Science. |
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