

## Outdoor Learning

Being outside is good for young children; they can move, run and climb. But the outdoors is good for more than just physical play. While participating in outdoor activities young children learn things that will help them be ready for school – such as observing and exploring science in action, learning about the world we live in and practicing early math & literacy skills in the real world.

But what types of outdoor activities are best for developing school readiness skills in babies, toddlers & preschoolers? Smart Beginnings has some simple ideas to help boost early brain development while enjoying time outside.

1. **Collect, count & sort** – young children enjoy looking for rocks, pinecones, sticks and other natural objects. Count & sort objects by size, shape, and color.
2. **Watch the clouds** - Lay down on a beach towel in the grass, and look up. Talk about the weather and the clouds. Are the clouds moving fast or slow? Do the shapes of the clouds look like anything? How many clouds are there?
3. **Go on a walk** – Build vocabulary by naming different objects when you see them. Find things of similar colors, or look for objects that start with the same letter as your child's name. Listen for noises and talk about the sounds you hear.
4. **Backyard Basics** – Keep some simple play items on hand to enhance outdoor learning time, such as sidewalk chalk, bubbles, bug jars, small shovels & buckets.

Scientific research shows kids are happier and healthier when outdoor time is in better balance with indoor time. In fact, ***The National Wildlife Federation recommends that parents give their kids a "Green Hour" every day.*** This can take place in a garden, a backyard, the park down the street, or any place that provides safe and accessible green spaces where children can learn and play.

So get outside with your child, and help them be ready for school and ready for life!

For more information about the importance of spending time outdoors, visit the "Outdoor Learning" board on the SBGR Pinterest Page [www.pinterest.com/SBRoanoke/](http://www.pinterest.com/SBRoanoke/)

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