



# OUTDOOR Family Fun

 **BE OUT THERE™**  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION®

FALL EDITION 2010

EASY OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR HAPPY, HEALTHY FAMILIES

IT'S BACK-TO-SCHOOL season. For kids, that means back to stuffy classrooms, piles of homework, and a packed, after-school schedule. Sadly, families find fewer opportunities to just *Be Out There™*, blowing off steam in a backyard or nearby park!

Outdoor time is good for a child's mind, body, and spirit—and, believe it or not, it's easy to incorporate a little fresh air into your family's busy routine. Here are some activities to get you started.

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## Alphabet Hunt

**WHAT YOU'RE DOING ANYWAY:**

Walking your children to school or waiting with them at the bus stop

**HOW YOU CAN "BE OUT THERE":**

Look for nature's alphabet.

Letters are hiding on the ground, in the trees, on the water, and in the sky. For example, a branch can form a "Y," a vine can form an "S," and a blade of grass can form an "l." You and your kids just need to use a little imagination. Once you begin to look at the world this way, letter shapes pop out at you from everywhere!

Find the letters in your first names. Then look for the rest of the alphabet.



Once you begin to look, letter shapes pop out from everywhere!

 **BE OUT THERE™**

## Moment



Outside, it's a perfect fall day, but you just looked at your child's homework assignments. Outside playtime? Not going to happen.

**TIP: Take homework outside!** Set up a clean outdoor workspace for your child on a patio table.

PHOTOS: FROM ABCS NATURALLY: A CHILD'S GUIDE TO THE ALPHABET THROUGH NATURE BY LYNN DIEBEL AND JANN KALSCHUR, PUBLISHED BY BIG EARTH PUBLISHING. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION.

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# Nature Detectives

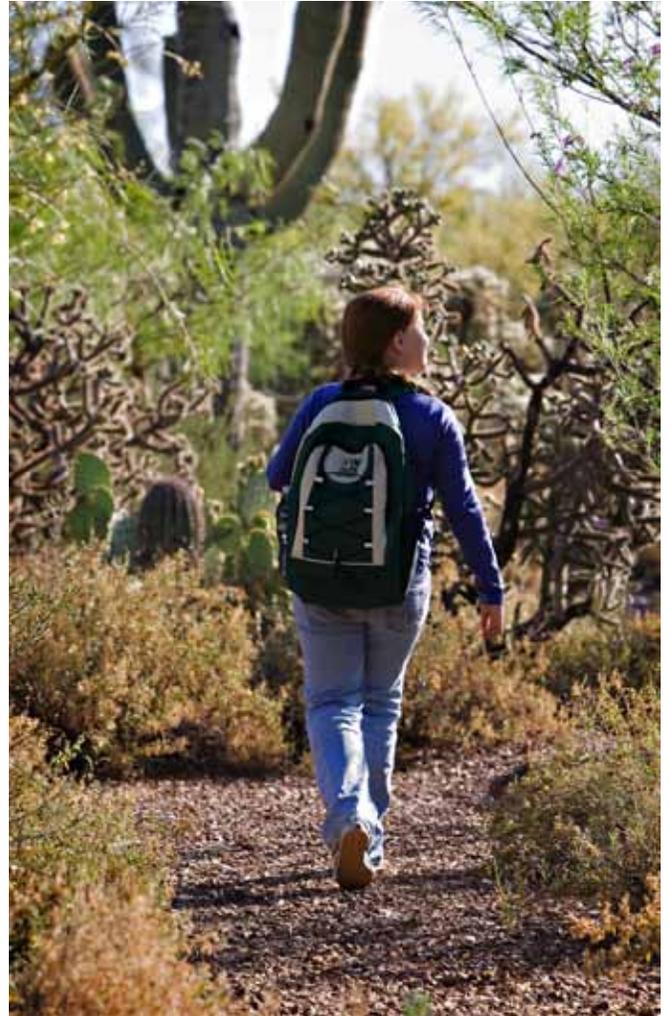
**WHAT YOU'RE DOING ANYWAY:** Watching an older sibling's soccer game

**HOW YOU CAN "BE OUT THERE":** Instead of tolerating refrains of "I'm bored!" challenge kids to become nature detectives in search of "natural" items.

**ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES:** Paper, pen or pencil

Write up a list of items to locate, such as the list below. Tell your children that if the item has the word "collect" next to it, they may take it with them. If the item has the words "describe and note location" next to it, they should write down where they found the item and leave it where it is.

- Blade of grass longer than your index finger (*collect*)
- Acorn cap (*collect*)
- Leaf on the ground (*collect*)
- Pine cone (*collect*)
- Twig longer than your thumb (*collect*)
- Plants or insects in a sidewalk crack (*describe and note location*)
- Signs of birds or birds themselves (*describe and note location*)
- Signs of mice, squirrels, or other small mammals—or the mammals themselves (*describe and note location*)
- Two different kinds of seeds (*collect*)



## BE OUT THERE™

### Moment



Your child comes home from school clutching new-found treasures: three crumbly leaves, a wilted flower, two acorns, and a dirt-encrusted rock.

**TIP:** Instead of putting them on the kitchen counter, in a drawer, or — *gasp!* — in the trash, display your child's treasures in a creative way: **start a nature "museum" on a table, shelf, or windowsill.**

**EXTRA HINT:** Limit the number of items that can be displayed at one time to keep things manageable.



## Did You Know?

Playing outside may help your child's vision. Recent studies find that kids who get regular outdoor time are less prone to nearsightedness and the need for eyeglasses.

# Leafy Fun

## WHAT YOU'RE DOING ANYWAY:

Raking leaves in your yard

## HOW YOU CAN "BE OUT THERE":

Get the whole family to help with the lawn cleanup. Make it fun with some leafy games!

**ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES:** Index cards, tape ("Leaf Memory"); shopping bag, sheets of blank paper, black or brown crayon ("Tree-mendous Match-Up")

**Leaf Labyrinth.** Rake paths through fallen leaves in a spiral or maze pattern, and then follow the trail.

**Leaf Spelling.** Rake leaves into names or initials.

**Leaf Angels.** Make an autumn version of a snow angel: Have everyone lie down in the leafy lawn and do jumping-jack movements with arms and legs.

**Leaf Jumping.** Conduct a contest to see who can create the biggest pile of leaves. Then take turns taking running jumps into the winning pile!

**Leaf Memory.** Collect leaves from trees and shrubs, and use them to play a memory game.\*

1. First, find eight to 12 pairs of matching leaves. (Two oak leaves, two maple leaves, etc.)
2. Glue or tape each leaf you collect to an index card.
3. Spread out all the cards, face down.
4. Take turns flipping over two cards, one at a time. If you get a match, keep those cards and take another turn.
5. The player with the most pairs at the end wins.

**Tree-mendous Match-Up.** Even if you live where leaves don't fall, you can take your family on a "leaf lookout" during this time of year.\*

1. Gather several leaves, each from a different type of tree in your neighborhood or park. Put the leaves in a bag and head out with your family.



2. Pull a leaf out of the bag and see if family members can match it with the type of tree it came from.
3. If you take some paper and a crayon, everyone can also make bark rubbings of some of the trees. Just press the paper to the bark and rub the crayon lightly over it. A crayon stub rubbed on its side works great for this activity.
4. Encourage family members to compile a tree book, complete with the leaves, the names of the trees the leaves come from, and their bark rubbings.



Everyone can help rake up all those leaves, and play some games, too!

\* To help you and your kids identify trees for this activity, a good resource is *First Guide to Trees* by George A. Petrides.



# Take a Moon Walk

**WHAT YOU'RE DOING ANYWAY:** The sun just went down—but the kids still have plenty of energy to burn before bedtime.

**HOW YOU CAN "BE OUT THERE":**

Take a moon walk.

Ready for an adventure? During the next full moon, take the family on a walk around a well-lit area of your neighborhood. Or, see if your favorite wild place is open to the public during the evening. In fact, many nature centers, parks, and ski resorts conduct special full-moon hikes. If you miss the full moon, the night or two before or after, the moon will still be shining brightly.

A shining full moon turns an ordinary night into something special. Shadows stretch into strange, long shapes. Silvery light touches everything with magic. It's a perfect time to explore.

Try to get away from the city lights so the moon won't be outshone. Take a flashlight for safety, but keep it tucked in a pocket to use only when you really need it. The longer you stay out in the dark, the better your night vision will become.

Listen for hooting owls, wind in the trees, and other night sounds. Lie down and look up at the starry sky. Enjoy the calm and quiet.

## Did You Know?

*Climbing trees, playing in the mud, and going on nature scavenger hunts can make kids healthier. Doctors say an hour of outdoor play a day helps ward off childhood obesity and diabetes.*

**BE OUT THERE™**

**Moment** 

With a blank piece of paper in front of her, your child looks up at you and asks, "What should I draw?"

**TIP:** Go for a walk together, and then **have your child draw a map of your neighborhood—using only natural landmarks.** This will heighten his or her observation skills and can be the first step in creating a "field guide" to the nature in your neighborhood.

PHOTO: GARY M. STOLZ/USFWS



Mark your family calendar! Full moons this fall are on September 23, October 22, and November 21.



Join National Wildlife Federation's *Be Out There™* movement, which inspires families to spend daily time outdoors together for their increased health and happiness. Find out more about the benefits of spending time outside and get free outdoor activities for the whole family. Visit [www.BeOutThere.org](http://www.BeOutThere.org).