

We Are Explorers — Daily

Lesson Plans

Dr. Dodge's Nature Preschool
Monthly Inquiry: Our Place in Nature · Week
One
Week of Aug 31 - Sept 4, 2026 · First week
of school!

Big Question: What does an explorer do? **Letter:** E is for Explorer (/e/ sound)

Book of the Week: What Is a Scientist?

Affirmation: "I am kind. I am brave. I am curious. I can do hard things. I belong here."

MONDAY AUG 31 · FIRST DAY!

Become Nature Explorers

ASK AT MORNING MEETING

"What does an explorer do? What do they carry? Where do they go?"

OBJECTIVES Children settle into school-year routines · identify what explorers do (look, listen, wonder, care) · begin their year-long field journals.

- 1 **Welcome + morning meeting:** first-day names and hellos, then chart their answers to the big question. Introduce the affirmation with motions.
- 2 **Tool stations:** magnifiers, real binoculars, collection bags, clipboards — free exploration of how explorer tools work.
- 3 **Explorer training walk** around the school grounds: practice slow walking, quiet listening, gentle looking.
- 4 **Craft time:** "E is for Explorer" nature collage (below).
- 5 **Hand out field journals:**

"Every real scientist keeps a journal. This one is YOURS for the whole year."

First entry: draw yourself as an explorer. (Save journals for Tuesday-start friends — they get theirs before the hike.)

- 6 **Closing circle:** read *What Is a Scientist?* and announce tomorrow's mission.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Chart paper + markers
- ☐ Magnifiers + binoculars
- ☐ Collection bags, clipboards
- ☐ Big letter-E cutouts + glue
- ☐ Nature bits for collage
- ☐ Field journals + crayons

VOCABULARY

explorer · scientist · binoculars · observe

READ-ALoud

What Is a Scientist?

LOOK FOR

First-day comfort levels — who needs an extra buddy tomorrow on the trail?

CRAFT — SELF-CONTAINED FIRST-DAY FUN

"E is for Explorer" Nature Collage

Each child gets a big cutout letter E and glues nature bits onto it — leaves, grass, small twigs, seeds — gathered on the training walk. Trace the E with a finger and say the /e/ sound together as they work. Hang the finished Es along the wall to spell out the year's first letter gallery. (Binoculars get made tomorrow morning so every hiker builds their own — including our Tuesday-start friends.)

Materials: large cardstock letter Es, glue, collected nature bits from the walk.

Make Binoculars → Explorer Expedition — Cathance River Nature Preserve, Topsham

"How many things can we discover that we've never noticed before?"

OBJECTIVES Children build and use a real explorer tool • notice textures, sounds, and animal clues in a real forest • practice trail safety and gentle hands.

- 1 **Make binoculars first thing** (craft below) — assembly-line style so the bus isn't waiting. Hand field journals to Tuesday-start friends:
- 2 **Before boarding:** binoculars around necks! Review trail rules: stay between the leaders, gentle hands, quiet feet.
- 3 **Slow wander** with binoculars and magnifiers — hunt for textures, tiny things, animal clues, and sounds.
- 4 **Sit spot:** two silent minutes; whisper-share the sounds heard.
- 5 **Journal stop:** on the trail or back at school, each child draws one discovery in their field journal; teachers scribe their words verbatim.
- 6 **Back at school:** photos onto a WHAT WE DISCOVERED board.

"Every real scientist keeps a journal. This one is YOURS for the whole year."

MATERIALS

- ☐ TP rolls (pre-taped pairs), yarn, hole punch, markers
- ☐ Magnifiers
- ☐ Field journals + crayons
- ☐ Camera/phone
- ☐ First aid + emergency forms

VOCABULARY

trail • texture • clue • discover

READ-ALoud

The Searcher and Old Tree

LOOK FOR

Who finds things others walk past? Note quotes for the newsletter.

MORNING CRAFT — MADE TO BE USED TODAY

Toilet-Paper-Roll Binoculars

Tape two TP rolls side by side, punch two holes, tie on a yarn neck strap sized so it slips over the head easily. A few quick marker decorations, then straight around necks and onto the bus — wearing something you built to do real science with is the whole point. Making them on trip day means every hiker gets a pair, including friends who weren't here Monday.

Materials: 2 TP rolls per child (plus spares), masking/washi tape, yarn, hole punch, markers. **Prep tip:** pre-tape the tube pairs tonight so kids go straight to decorating and stringing.

TRAIL CRAFT (NO SUPPLIES TO CARRY HOME — IMPRESSIONS ONLY)

Bark + Leaf Rubbings

Paper on clipboards over bark, leaves, and stones; rub with the side of a chunky crayon. Each child collects 2–3 rubbings on the trail, then glues their favorite into their field journal back at school. Take impressions, not treasures — leave the preserve as we found it.

Materials: paper, clipboards, jumbo crayons (paper peeled off).

Five Senses Investigation

"What tools do explorers carry with them ALL the time — even without a backpack?"

OBJECTIVES Children name the five senses • match each sense to its body part • describe objects using sensory words.

- 1 **Morning meeting:** reveal the answer — our senses! Point to eyes, ears, nose, hands, mouth as you name them.
- 2 **Sense stations** (rotate in small groups): feely box (touch), smell jars with herbs (smell), sound shakers to match by ear (hearing), I-Spy magnifier tray (sight), tiny taste test (taste).
- 3 **Outside:** "eyes-closed listening" — how many sounds in one minute? Tally together.
- 4 **Craft time:** the Five Senses Card (below) — each child builds their own sense-by-sense reference card.
- 5 **Closing:** re-read *What Is a Scientist?* — which senses did the kids in the book use? Then children "read" their cards to a partner, touching each item as they name the sense.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Feely box + textures
- ☐ Smell jars (herbs)
- ☐ Matching sound shakers
- ☐ Magnifier tray
- ☐ Simple tasting snack
- ☐ Card supplies (below)

VOCABULARY

senses • sight • sound • smell • touch • taste

READ-ALoud

Hide and Seek Fog

LOOK FOR

Who uses describing words unprompted (fuzzy, salty, jingly)?

CRAFT — THE CENTERPIECE TODAY

My Five Senses Card

Each child gets a sturdy card divided into five sections, one per sense, and glues a real thing into each: a **fuzz ball** for touch, **salt crystals** pressed onto a dot of glue for taste, a **jingle bell** for sound, a **sprig of herb** (rosemary, lavender, or mint) for smell, and for sight, a **small mirror sticker or shiny gem** — "what do your eyes see? YOU!" Label each section with the body part (hand, tongue, ear, nose, eye) as they work.

The finished card is interactive: they can pet it, shake it, sniff it, and peek at it. Send home Friday so families can play "show me the sense" together.

Materials: cardstock cards (pre-divided into 5), glue, fuzz/pom-poms, salt, jingle bells, fresh herb sprigs, mirror stickers or gems. **Safety:** use larger bells, tape them down well, and supervise closely — small parts and little mouths.

Water Explorers + Swim — Reid State Park, Georgetown

"What can explorers discover at the water's edge?"

OBJECTIVES Children explore a shoreline habitat · compare beach discoveries to forest discoveries · build water confidence and joy.

- 1 **Before boarding:** water safety talk — scientists stay between the flags/leaders; adults set the wading line. Binoculars around necks!
- 2 **Shoreline wander:** shells, seaweed, crab shells, bird tracks, tide pools if accessible. Compare aloud:

"Is this like the forest on Tuesday? What's the same? What's different?"
- 3 **Journal stop:** field journals out during a calm stretch — draw one beach discovery.
- 4 **Swim time** — the celebration of the week!
- 5 **Full change of clothes,** snack, and a sleepy bus ride home.

MATERIALS

- ☐ Swimsuits + towels (families pack)
- ☐ Binoculars + magnifiers
- ☐ Field journals + crayons
- ☐ Buckets + shovels
- ☐ Sunscreen, shade tent
- ☐ Extra adults for water ratio
- ☐ First aid + emergency forms

VOCABULARY

shore · tide · wave · float

READ-ALoud

Over in Australia (animal habitats far away)

LOOK FOR

Comfort levels in water — note for future trips.

OPTIONAL BEACH CRAFT (IF THE DAY ALLOWS)

Sand Treasure Frames

Pre-cut cardboard frames; children paint on glue, press into dry sand, then arrange found shells and seaweed bits on top (collect only where permitted — check park rules; sand-only frames are just as loved). They dry on the ride home and frame each child's trip photo next week. Skip guilt-free if the swim runs long — the swim IS the day.

Materials: cardboard frames, glue + brushes, zip bag of dry sand backup.

Sort, Share + Reflect: "What Does an Explorer Do?"

"On Monday we wondered what explorers do. What do YOU think now?"

OBJECTIVES Children sort and classify the week's discoveries • retell their experiences • connect "explorer" to their own identity.

- 1 **Morning meeting:** revisit Monday's chart. Add their new answers in a different color — visible learning!
 - 2 **Sorting tables:** photos and (permitted) collections sorted by where found — forest / beach / school. Count each group.
 - 3 **Field journal share:** children flip to their favorite page and present it to the circle — first "science talk" of the year.
 - 4 **Class book** (below) — the week becomes a keepsake.
 - 5 **Closing celebration:** each child crosses the "explorer bridge" (a balance beam) to big applause:
- "You are officially a Nature Scientist."*
- 6 **Send home** the Five Senses Cards with a note: "Ask me to show you the sense of touch!"

► **Remind families at pickup: closed Monday, Sept 7 for Labor Day — Tiny Worlds begins Tuesday!**

MATERIALS

- ☐ Monday's chart + new marker color
- ☐ Sorting trays
- ☐ Field journals
- ☐ Blank class-book pages
- ☐ Balance beam
- ☐ Five Senses Cards to send home

VOCABULARY

sort • same • different • remember

READ-ALoud

The Big Bug Search (sneaky preview of next week!)

LOOK FOR

How each child describes themselves as an explorer — quote gold.

CRAFT / KEEPSAKE**Class Book: "What Does an Explorer Do?"**

Each child gets one page: they draw, and dictate one sentence that a teacher writes exactly as spoken ("An explorer finds crabs and doesn't squish them"). Bind with rings; it lives in the book basket all year. Reading their OWN book becomes a favorite.

Materials: cardstock pages, crayons, binder rings, hole punch.