

CREATE YOUR OWN FIELD GUIDE



Take advantage of the warm summer days and get your child started on a project that they can continue all year long. By making their own field guide for the park, the woods, or your own backyard, they will gain a new appreciation for the living things around them, while developing classification and writing skills. This is a great way to channel your child's curiosity!

Materials:

- Loose-leaf paper
- Three-ring binder
- Pencil
- Clipboard
- Digital Camera (optional)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Access to non-fiction resource books, field guides, or online field guides

What You Do:

1. Take your child exploring. Choose an outdoor area where they can observe living creatures in their natural setting, such as a garden, a park or a corner of your backyard. Discuss how many creatures they'd like to put in their field guide. (3-4 is a good starting point)
2. Have your child draw the animals and plants he sees on the blank paper, using a clipboard (you could also use a digital camera, but drawing is more fun!) Point out that it is important to look closely at details, so they will later be able to identify these creatures. For example, if you are looking at a tree, what's the shape of its leaves? What does its bark look like? What's the overall shape of the tree?
3. Back at home, assist your child in using resources, such as books and internet field guides, to identify the living things he observed. A good online source is www.enature.com. Your child will need to recall those tiny details in order to identify individual species.
4. Now it's time to create a page about each creature for your field guide. They'll can to include general information about the plant or animal, such as its name and classification, where it lives, what it eats, and how it grows. It's also fun to include lesser-known facts about it, too. Is it poisonous? Is it a source of food for certain animals? Have your child write this information in a paragraph or two, and include his initial illustration or create a new one. The layout possibilities are endless, encourage them to be creative and have fun.
5. After a page has been made for each creature, have your child place the pages in the binder. Encourage him to go out every month to add more pages to the book later. As more pages are added, they may want to rearrange pages in the field guide according to their classifications, organizing it into a section on animals, etc.

This craft is adapted from www.education.com