

Connecting Kids to Nature

Try this activity in a forest—a natural place to learn!

For over 30 years, Project Learning Tree® has used the forest as a “window” to help young people gain an awareness of the world around them and their place within it. Blending a walk in the forest with a fun and engaging PLT activity creates a powerful learning experience for children of all ages. Here’s one idea in a series from PLT that introduces the concept of **forest cycles**.

Activity 21: Adopt a Tree

In this activity, children “adopt” a tree, deepening their awareness of individual trees over time and encouraging a greater understanding and appreciation of their local environment.

Doing the Activity

The next time you are on a walk in a familiar area, invite children to choose a particular tree to observe. Suggest they become better acquainted with it by using their senses of sight, touch, hearing, and smell to describe the tree. Encourage critical thinking by asking:

- Is this tree alive? How do you know?
- How is this tree similar to and/or different from other trees around it?
- How does this tree help the environment around it?

Complete the Adopt a Tree Journal Entry below. Revisit this tree on a regular basis throughout the year and in a variety of weather conditions. Have children guess reasons for the changes they see and then predict changes for the future.

Adopt a Tree Journal Entry

Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Describe the tree _____

What color is the bark? _____

Why did you choose this tree? _____

What type of tree is it? _____

In the box, draw a picture of your tree or use a crayon or pencil to complete a leaf or bark rubbing.

My Adopted Tree

HOW MANY SEASONAL SIGNS CAN YOU FIND?

Spring

- Bursting buds
- Emerging insects
- Ice-free lakes
- Birds preparing nests

Summer

- Ripe berries
- Lightning bugs (fireflies)
- Thunderstorms
- Longer days

Fall

- Leaf color change
- Fallen leaves
- Bird migration
- Colder temperatures

Winter

- Bare branches
- Animal tracks in the snow
- Visible animal homes
- Shorter days

Adapted from Activity 21: Adopt a Tree from *Project Learning Tree's PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide*.

Discover how PLT can help you teach... from nature!

- Attend a workshop near you to receive PLT activity guides, ideas, and materials.
- To contact your local PLT State Coordinator, visit www.plt.org or call 202-765-3641.

www.plt.org



Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is a program of the American Forest Foundation.