

Connecting Kids to Nature

Nature is a great teacher! Try this activity - it's safe, fun, and educational. Project Learning Tree® activities build children's creative and critical thinking skills while they learn what the environment needs to remain healthy and sustainable.

Activity 62: To Be a Tree

By making a tree costume, children will gain awareness of tree structure and functions.

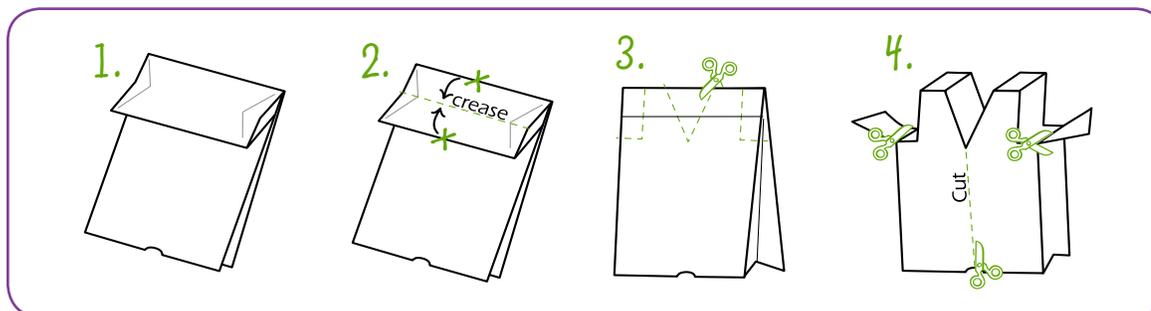
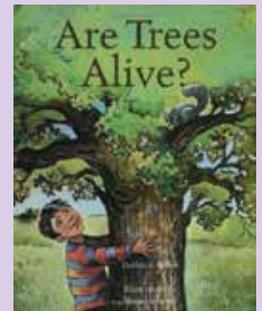
Doing the Activity

On your next walk, select a tree and ask children to name and identify its component parts (trunk, branch, leaves, bark, roots, etc.). Collect a few leaves and after heading back inside, invite children to make leaf rubbings by placing leaves (vein side up) on white paper and rubbing over them with the sides of paperless crayons. Carefully cut out the leaf rubbings, punch a hole in each, and use yarn to string them together into a crown.

Next, use the pattern below to help children create a paper bag vest. This vest can be worn with the leaf crown above to make a tree costume that models real tree parts.

Are Trees Alive?

Ask older children to research phloem, cambium, xylem, and heartwood to better understand the material metaphors used on their tree vests. Skip this higher level vocabulary with younger children and instead read *Are Trees Alive?* by Debbie Miller (2002), which talks about the ways in which trees and people are alike (ISBN: 0802788017).



With a child's torso serving as a tree's trunk and their arms as branches, ask children to add these tree parts to their vests:

- **Bark** - glue pieces of bark directly to OR try a bark rubbing on the outside of vest
- **Roots** - tape long strands of yarn to the bottom of the vest
- **Phloem** - glue stirring straws (smaller diameter) to the inside of vest
- **Cambium** - attach tissue paper to the inside of vest
- **Xylem** - tape drinking straws (larger diameter) to the inside of vest
- **Heartwood** - create a paper chain to wear as a belt

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Adapted from Activity 62: To Be a Tree from Project Learning Tree's PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide.

PLT improves children's environmental awareness, critical thinking skills, and academic performance.

- Attend a workshop near you to receive PreK-12 PLT activities, ideas, and materials.
- Encourage your child's school to incorporate outdoor learning and PLT.
- Learn more at www.plt.org or call 202-765-3641



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

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