Field, Forest, and Stream

Physical factors such as sunlight, wind, and water influence the suitability of an area for plant and animal life. By comparing different environments, we can begin to understand how nonliving elements can influence living elements within an ecosystem.

Select two outdoor study sites. You might choose a forested area, local park, or even your own backyard. Use a data collection sheet (such as the one provided by PLT at http://bit.ly/208en6S) to track and compare data points for levels of Sunlight, Wind, and Slope at each of your chosen locations.

For Sunlight, use relative terms such as shady, dark, medium light, or bright.

For Wind, use a compass to determine the direction from which the wind is blowing (see Compass Measurements inset at right).

For Slope, slowly pour water onto the ground and observe where it goes. Then use a compass to determine the direction of water flow (see Compass Measurements). Later look at a map of the area to identify the body of water that will eventually be reached by the water you poured.

Explore and Review
• Which study site had the greatest number of plants? Animals? How might you explain this difference?
• How might wind and water flow affect plants?
• Which site did you prefer? Why?

Test Your Understanding
You are standing on your forest field site with the wind at your back. You have followed Steps 1–3. From which direction is the wind blowing?

Make Learning Fun!
Encourage your child’s school to incorporate learning outdoors. For more activity ideas and materials:
• Attend a PLT workshop, www.plt.org/state-network/
• Visit shop.plt.org

www.plt.org