

Connecting Kids to Nature

Nature is a great teacher and getting kids outside to learn and play is good for their brains and their bodies. Try this outdoor activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's safe, fun, and educational!

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/208en65>) 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).

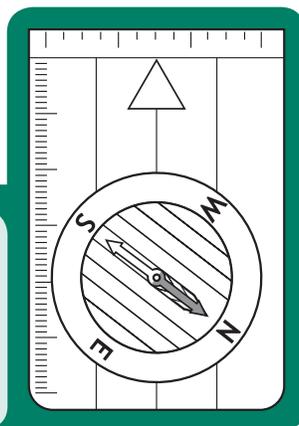
For Slope, slowly pour water onto the ground and observe where it goes. Then use a compass to determine the direction of water flow (see Compass Measurements). Later look at a map of the area to identify the body of water that will eventually be reached by the water you poured.

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!

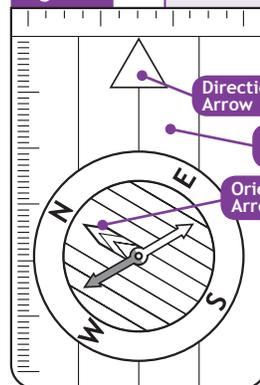
Encourage your child's school to incorporate learning outdoors.

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop, www.plt.org/state-network/
- Visit shop.plt.org

Compass Measurements: Wind Direction and Water Flow

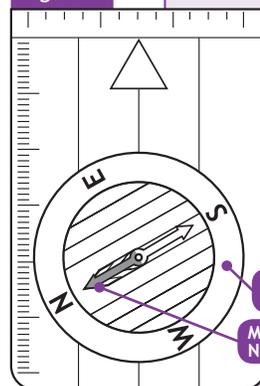
Figure 1



STEP 1: Turn your body so that you face the same direction the water is flowing.

STEP 2: Hold a compass in the palm of your hand at waist level, parallel to the ground. Orient the compass so that the direction-of-travel arrow faces away from your body (Figure 1).

Figure 2



STEP 3: Turn the housing dial of the compass (not your body, not the compass) until the orienting arrow aligns with the magnetic needle indicating true north (Figure 2).

STEP 4: Determine direction. The direction the stream is flowing from is the direction closest to your belly button (it can also be read in degrees, which are not provided here). In this case, the stream is flowing from the Northwest (approximately 300 degrees).

Note: To measure wind direction follow the same procedure, except turn your body so that the wind is at your back.



Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is an initiative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

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