



## Preschool Nature & Science Tip Sheet

The science interest center should have nature and science materials grouped together in a clearly defined interest center. The materials should not contain other types of materials.

All materials should be on low, open shelves, and should be easily accessible. Living things that children can care for, such as plants or pets, should also be accessible as part of the interest center, and should be within easy view of children.

Sand/water play with a variety of appropriate toys should be accessible, but does not have to be located within the interest center,



Staff should talk about nature/science with the children. Examples could be weather, discussing healthy foods, naming animals, or identifying nature/science materials. Staff should also use and talk about nature/science materials with the children.

Teachers should show interest and affinity for the natural world. For example, a teacher might show interest if a child discovers an insect on the playground.

Teachers should model concern for the environment. Some examples of how to do this could be to tell children why you are turning off the lights when leaving the classroom, or to encourage the children to recycle their used paper.

Staff should initiate science activities that involve things such as comparing or sorting using nature/science materials.

Children should have an opportunity to observe and help care for living things. Staff should talk with children about the plant/pet while doing so.

In the nature/science interest center, classrooms should include a variety of each of the following categories:

1. **Living things** - pets, non-toxic houseplants children can observe closely.
2. **Natural objects** - leaves, rocks, seashells, bark, insects in transparent plastic, etc.
3. **Factual books/nature science picture games** - realistic/factual nature/science books should be found within the science interest center, and realistic picture games/puzzles can also be offered.
4. **Tools** - magnets, magnifying glasses, etc.
5. **Sand/water** - There should be a sufficient quantity for children to scoop, pour, and fill/empty containers. Food items, packing materials, or items like leaves or should not be used. A variety of accessories should be offered.

### **Language to use in science and nature**

#### **Examples of vocabulary words**

- estimate
- climate
- predict
- habitat
- experiment
- document
- hypothesis (guess)
- observe
- explore

#### **Examples of open-ended questions to ask:**

- What would happen if...?
- What do you want to find out about .....
- What do you suppose would happen if we.....?
- How can we take good care of .....
- What is the weather outside today?
- What else did you notice?
- How did the air feel outside today?
- Does anyone have a guess (hypothesis) about what the weather might be like later on?