

Exploring Up Close

Observing a small space helps us better understand our big environment.



Age: All

Time: 30 minutes

Choose a spot in the Meadow or the Children's Discovery Forest to explore.

Here's How:

1. Mark a square on the ground by walking 4 steps, turning left, and walking 4 steps, turning left, and walking 4 steps, turning left, and walking 4 steps.

2. Stand on a spot on the edge of your square.

- What is the weather like?
- What time of day is it?
- While standing, spend at least 1-2 minutes quietly looking at everything within the square.
- What kinds of things do you recognize (stones, plants)?
- Tell someone what you see.

3. Now kneel or sit on the same spot on the edge of your square. Take time to look closely at everything within the square. Use your eyes and a magnifying glass if you have one.

- What is sticking up and what is lying down flat?
- Look at shapes and colors. How many shades of green or yellow or brown do you see?
- Do you see any repeated designs, like blades of grass or flower petals?
- Is anything moving?
- Explore textures by touching, and scents by smelling.
- Close your eyes and listen. What do you hear?
- What do you feel on your skin—breeze, warmth, rain?
- Look under stones or grass or leaves or plants. What do you see?
- What items are most plentiful in your square?
- What do you notice while sitting or kneeling that is different from when you were standing?
- How do you feel while observing?
- Tell someone what you see and what you like about it.

4. Make sketches of what you see, using colored pencils if you have them.

The Back Story:

Think about how your square relates to the environment all around it. How do you think animals and people use this area?

Observation requires effort and patience and practice. It involves using senses and noticing details. It means you explore carefully, and that you analyze what you see. In other words, you break down what you see into parts then put it all back together to better understand what you are seeing. Practice observing each day and you will begin to notice details in your environment.