

Activity: Get to Know Insects

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Materials:

• [Insect Observation Worksheet](#) • Plastic spoon • 2 Plastic cups (Petri dishes, lidded plastic containers, sample bottles, etc.) • Magnifier box, or hand lens

01

In order to know where students are in their understanding of insects, here are some example questions to start with.

- 1. What's the difference between an insect and a spider?**
 - a. Spiders have two body segments and 8 legs, whereas insects have only 6 legs and have three distinct body segments (head, thorax, and abdomen).
- 2. What might be the most common insect we would find around the school?** Probably ants. Ants are one of the most common insects in the urban environment, easily found around most sidewalks, flower beds, and grassy areas around schools.
- 3. Can you think of some insects that are beneficial or helpful to people?** There are literally thousands of species of insects that provide benefits of some kind to people in many ways. One of the most obvious examples is that of honeybees, which produce a valuable food (honey), and which also help the fruit growing industry by pollinating fruit tree blossoms.

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02

Background

This activity is made more meaningful if children have some prior knowledge of insects, understand their basic anatomy, are able to differentiate them from other organisms and know some of the major groups of common insects.

- These [background information pages](#) should be worked through with the support of a teacher, parent or guardian
- Here are some alternate resources that could help provide some interesting background information about insects:
 - [Scholastic : General Facts about Insects and Bugs](#)
 - [Video: Facts about Insects for Kids](#)

03

After the background information has been reviewed, give students an opportunity to ask any remaining questions that they have before preparing to go on a hunt for insects!

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04

Ready to get hunting for insects?

Things to consider: **Location**

- Parents may work with students to find an ideal location to look for, and observe insects. Here are some ideas:
 - Under a log
 - Near or under rocks or gravel
 - In a grassy spot in full sunlight
 - At the base of a tree
 - In the leaf litter on the forest floor
 - In the leaves and blossoms of a flowering plant
 - On the trunk and branches of a tree
 - Near the wall of a building
 - On or near a sidewalk

05

Students will choose **two** different habitats/locations, and spent 10-15 minutes at each location .

Important reminder for students:

- Handle insects gently as they are observed, if they move too quickly, move on.
- Be patient! Be very careful and quiet so the habitat is disrupted as little as possible!

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06 Now it's time to send students off and **start observing!**

Take **this worksheet**, your observation tools (refer to slide one), and a pencil to record. Instruct students to use the spoon to gently put the insects into the plastic lid/dish to observe. If you have access to a magnifying glass, it will help students examine the bugs more closely.

07 **Debrief:** Come back together to have a debrief conversation (with a parent, virtually with your class, or in whatever format is available to you!) Here are some guiding questions:

1. In which location did we find the MOST insects?
2. Who found organisms that were NOT insects? What were they?
3. Who found the biggest insect? Where was it found?
4. What animals in this area might be eating these insects? (Prompt your students for answers such as birds, mice, shrews, bats, other insects.)