

Simple Ways to Explore Trees

Activity #1: Indoor Magical Forest

For Parents and Children 2-6 years



Dress up your home by making a magical forest for fairies and gnomes. Make a single enchanted tree or an entire forest for a magical creature. This indoor magical forest can be a stage on which to tell stories through interaction with characters.

Materials: A flat base such as a tray, bark or log. Small rocks or gravel for pathways or benches. Natural objects such as leaves, seeds, twigs, small branches. Clothes pins, play dough or clay to use as bases for trees and other objects. Dried flowers, dandelions, shiny objects for embellishments. Small stuffed animals or action figures for characters.



1. **Imagine what a magical forest looks like and who lives in it.** What kinds of trees and animals live in a magical forest? What can we use to represent plants, birds, trees? What magical creature lives in your forest? Where in your forest does the magical creature play, eat, sleep?

2. **Collect.** Go outdoors and find objects that will become part of your forest. It's generally okay to pick the four Fs: foliage, fruits, fungi, and flowers—as long as they are growing wild. Be selective; don't collect too much from one plant.

3. **Build your magical forest.** Back at home, create the different sections of the forest. Will you include hills, plants, bodies of water, secret pathways, shelters, animals?

4. **Tell your story.** Once the stage is ready and the characters are chosen, it's time to play. Start with open-ended play and conversation to explore and connect with the forest. Children create stories as they play; observe and listen to your child's ideas about what's happening. In the process, the stage and the story may change and grow. You can participate by playing alongside and building on ideas your child proposes.

