

Explorers Preschool Curriculum

Let's Explore Day and Night



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Thank you to the following colleagues who supported the development of Explorers Preschool Curriculum.

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Let's Explore Day and Night

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If Explorers Preschool Curriculum is new to you, or if you would like to review big ideas about this curriculum, see the Using Explorers section at the end of this packet.

An expanded Getting Started guide can also be found under the resources tab at www.ASUChildhoodServices.org

Let's Explore: Day and Night

Preschoolers may be intrigued by the patterns and rhythm of day and night. This topic invites children to compare their own, familiar morning and evening routines with those of classmates. It can also support many summertime events that children may experience: camping, fireworks, fireflies, and more.

This topic might be a fit for you if...

- You've noticed that going to bed/waking up often emerge as themes in children's imaginative play.
- Topics like nighttime or camping often come up in children's conversations.
- Most families would be willing to help children investigate at home.

Let's Talk about Day and Night

Model words like these during everyday conversations with children.

asleep
awake
dawn
dusk
evening
midday
moon
morning
nocturnal
sunrise
sunset
twilight

Words to describe time: early, late, tonight, tomorrow

Words to describe and compare daylight: bright, brighter, dim, dark, darker, darkest



Day and Night Collectibles

Collect some of these interesting objects to investigate with children. Families can help!

alarm clock
moon phase poster/calendar
flashlights and battery-operated lanterns
glow-in-the dark plastic stars
camping equipment

Preparing to Explore Day and Night

1. With your teaching team, think about and discuss the following questions.
 - What experiences have our children had with night and day? What background knowledge do they most likely have? What seems to interest children most about this broad topic?
 - What resources could be helpful as we explore this topic with children? Are there any special places we might go to, or special people who might visit our classroom, as we learn about day and night?
 - What are some things that children might learn and do as we explore day and night? What new words or concepts could they begin to understand?
2. Let families know that the group is interested in day and night. What can they tell you about their family's experiences? Think together about ways that families can be involved. For example, a parent might be interested in setting up a tent on the playground, or a grandparent might be willing to play guitar and sing their family's traditional lullabies to children.
3. Gather books and materials to add to learning centers and to use during small group experiences. You'll find suggestions on the pages that follow.



Learning Center Extensions – Day and Night

Here are some examples of materials that can be added to your learning centers to support children’s exploration of day and night during daily free play times.

Not all materials need to be added at the same time. Choose materials based on what you have available and the ages, interests, and abilities of the children in your group. You may also choose to add more – or different – materials over time during your investigation.

For more information on incorporating materials into your classroom, see the *Learning Everywhere* section in the Getting Started packet.

Dramatic Play Area

- Props for putting dolls to bed such as doll bed and blanket, child-sized rocking chair, music player with lullabies
- Clothes for day and night: pajama tops with snaps or buttons, slippers; sunglasses
- Clean, empty breakfast food containers, such as small juice bottles and milk jugs, yogurt cups, and cereal boxes
- Props for camping such as a tent, pretend campfire, flashlights, lantern, binoculars, trail map, small ice chest, backpacks, forest animal soft toys or puppets

Block Building Area

- Toy animals representing North American wildlife, including nocturnal (night) and diurnal (day) animals
- Pieces of fabric to drape over block structures to make tents and dens
- Battery-operated LED tealight candles

Fine Motor/Table Toy Area

- Small figures with camping playset; try pairing with Lincoln Logs
- Board game: Hoot Owl Hoot by Peaceable Kingdom (introduce as a small group activity)
- After being introduced to children, materials from the **Sorting Day and Night** small group learning experience may also be offered for free choice use.

Learning Center Extensions – Day and Night

Science Area

- Simple flashlights with large C or D-cell batteries for children to take apart and reassemble
- Tray of things to explore with flashlights such as a small colander, an unbreakable locker mirror, a simple shadow puppet, old CD, and/or translucent plastic magnet tiles or party cups
- Photos about day and night, such as those available online with this curriculum
- Factual books about day and night

Day and Night (First Step Nonfiction)

Robin Nelson, LernerClassroom, 2010

The Moon Seems to Change

Dr. Franklin M. Branley, Harper Collins, 2015

- After being introduced to children, materials from the **Day and Night Globe** small group learning experience may also be offered for free choice use.

Art Area

- Foil star stickers
- Dark paper with chalk and/or metallic markers
- Black and white easel paint (for mixing grays).
- Easel paints in deep shades of cobalt, indigo, and midnight blue, paired with silver or gold glitter glue
- After being introduced to children, materials from the **Sunset Painting** small group learning experience may also be offered for free choice use.

Other

- A dollhouse area with people and furniture, including beds. The dollhouse can be placed on a table or on the floor with a small rug – such as a fuzzy bath mat – for children to sit on as they play.

Book Area

Add some of these books and/or your favorite books with day and night.

Flashlight, Lizi Boyd, Chronicle Books, 2014

Good Day, Good Night, Margaret Wise Brown and Loren Long, HarperCollins, 2017

Good Morning Yoga, Miriam Gates and Sarah Jane Hinder, Sounds True, 2016

Good Night Bat, Good Morning Squirrel, Paul Meisel, Boyds Mills Press, 2016*

Good Night, Gorilla, Peggy Rathman, G.P. Putnam Sons Books for Young Readers, 1994*

The House in the Night, Susan Marie Swanson and Beth Krommes, HMH, 2008

I Took the Moon for a Walk, Carolyn Curtis and Alison Jay, Barefoot Books, 2012

Kitten's First Full Moon, Kevin Henkes, Greenwillow Books, 2004*

Little Owl's Day, Divya Srinivasan, Viking Books, 2014

Little Owl's Night, Divya Srinivasan, Viking Books, 2014

Moon: A Peek-Through Picture Book, Brita Teckentrup, Doubleday Books, 2018

Nighttime Symphony, Timbaland and Christopher Myers, Atheneum Books, 2019

Owl Babies, Martin Waddell and Patrick Benson, Candlewick, 201*

Stars, Mary Lyn Ray and Marla Frazee, Beach Lane Books, 2011*

Welcome to Morningtown, Blake Liliane Hellman and Steven Henry, Bloomsbury, 2019*

What Color is Night?, Grant Snider, Chronicle Books, 2019

What Sound is Morning?, Grant Snider, Chronicle Books, 2020*

What the Sun Sees, What the Moon Sees, Nancy Tafuri, Greenwillow Books, 1997*

*Denotes a recommended read-aloud to share with groups of children.

Talking About Books

As you share books with individuals, small groups, or larger groups of children, ask questions like these:

- **Beginning:** I wonder what this book is about. Do you see any clues on the cover?
- **Middle:** What do you think might happen next?
- **End:** Did you have a favorite character in this story?

Conversations about Day and Night

Use prompts like these as you talk with children throughout the day. For more information on incorporating planned conversations into your daily schedule, see the *Learning Every Day* section in the Getting Started packet.

Day and Night Conversations

daily - during meals, play times, transitions, or group times

Try asking one or two questions like these when you have opportunities to talk with individuals, small groups, or the larger group of children.

- What are some things you know about morning?
- What are some things that you wonder about nighttime?
- What are some things that you do when you wake up in the morning?
- What are some things that you do to get ready for bed?
- I wonder: why don't we wear sunglasses at night?
- Have you ever been camping? (If yes, ask follow up questions.)
- What are some things you see in the sky in the daytime? How about at night?
- Where do you think squirrels sleep at night?
- Where do you think raccoons go during the daytime?
- On a cloudy day: Where is the sun today? Do you think we'll be able to see the moon tonight? What are some ways that we can be safe when there are fireworks?

At least once a week, make a chart to write down children's answers to a question. Talk with children one, two, or a few at a time to collect answers. Later, read the written responses back to the group. Post the chart where it can be viewed by children and families.

How do you get ready for bed?

I put on pajamas. - Ava W.
I pick 3 stories to read in my bed.
- Ajay
I brush my teeth. - Grace
I have a drink of water. - Jervae
I wear my dinosaur pajamas. - Eli
I give my baby a goodnight kiss.
- Donovan
I tell Grammy goodnight. - Sam
I turn on my nightlight. - Alexander
I take a bubble bath and put on a nightgown. - Kaylin
I Kiss Mommy goodnight. - Ava C.
I say goodnight to Dilly and Pickles.
(cats) - Mason
I say goodnight to the moon. - Ben
I brush my teeth. - Sofia
I have a story in my bed. - Bella

Conversations about Day and Night

Day and Night Polls

1-3 times per week – at arrival or group time

Choose a question from the list below or think of one of your own. Make a chart with the question and two possible responses, using picture cues when possible. Invite children to write their names or place name cards to respond.

- Have you ever been camping?
- Have you ever caught a firefly?
- Do you like to watch fireworks?
- Have you ever heard an owl?
(Plan to play [recordings](#) at group time.)
- Would you rather – Get up early?
Or stay up late?
- Would you rather – Camp in a tent?
Or camp in a cabin?

Have you ever heard an owl?	
Yes	No

Sharing Experiences So Far

Several times a week - during meals or play times

As you talk with individuals and small groups of children, tell about your own, positive experience related to day and night. You might talk about sleeping in a bunk bed as a child, going to your town's firework display, or getting up early to see a beautiful sunrise.

Listen attentively as children tell about their experiences, too. Help children make connections between shared experiences. ("Cora, you and Eytan both have mothers who work overnight at the hospital sometimes.")

Songs, Rhymes, and Games about Day and Night

These playful songs, rhymes, and games can be incorporated into group times and transition times.

Are You Sleeping/ Frère Jacques - *traditional children's song in English and French*

Are you sleeping,
Are you sleeping,
Brother John,
Brother John?

Morning bells are ringing,
Morning bells are ringing,
Ding, ding, dong,
Ding, ding, dong,

Frère Jacques
Frère Jacques
Dormez-vous?
Dormez-vous?

Sonnez les matines
Sonnez les matines
Ding, ding, dong
Ding, ding, dong

Day and Night poem- *from a traditional English lullaby*

By day the shadows slip away,
At evening back they creep.
The sun gives light enough for play,
The stars enough for sleep.

5 Little Owls poem- *from a traditional English poem*

Five little owls in an old elm tree,
Fluffy and puffy as owls could be.
Blinking and winking with big round eyes
At the big round moon that hung in the sky.
Hoo-hoo, hoo-hoo, hoo-hooooo.

If It's Morning and You Know It – *to the tune of If You're Happy and You Know It*

If it's nighttime and you know it, head to bed. (Stretch, yawn, and say "Goodnight!
If it's nighttime and you know it, head to bed. (Stretch, yawn, and say "Goodnight!
If it's nighttime and you know it and you really want to show it,
If it's nighttime and you know it, head to bed. (Stretch, yawn, and say "Goodnight!

Lie down and pretend to sleep before the next verse:

If it's morning and you know it, wake right up! (Pop up and say "Good morning!")

Songs, Rhymes, and Games about Day and Night

Did You Ever See a Night Creature? – to the tune of Did You Ever See a Lassie

Spread arms like wings and swoop from side to side as you sing:

Did you ever see an owl, an owl, an owl?

Did you ever see an owl fly this way and that?

Fly this way and that way,

And this way and that way,

Did you ever see an owl fly this way and that?

Additional verses:

Did you ever see a raccoon crawl this way and that?

Did you ever see a firefly blink this way and that?

Did you ever see a skunk spray this way and that?

What other verses can children think of and act out?

Goodnight Chant

Try this chant at the beginning of rest time. Or, invite children to rock baby dolls or soft toy animals as they recite the words.

Leader: Goodnight to you.

Children: Goodnight to me.

Leader: Goodnight, sleep tight, sweet dreams tonight.

Children: Goodnight, sleep tight, sweet dreams tonight.

More Traditional Day and Night Songs and Rhymes

- Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush
- Hey, Diddle Diddle
- Mr. Golden Sun
- Ten in the Bed
- Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
- You Are My Sunshine



Day and Night Playlist

A Beautiful Day – Jack Hartmann

Firefly - Jazzy Ash

Good Morning Song – Alphabet Rockers

Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin' - from the musical *Oklahoma!*

Pajama Time – Laurie Berkner Band

Tú Eres Mi Sol – Elizabeth Mitchell

Small Group Learning Experiences – Day and Night

Share learning experiences like the ones on the following pages with small groups of children each day. Groups should usually consist of 3-7 children, rather than the whole group at once. Small group experiences may take place as children choose to join a teacher during free play time, or there might be a special small group time included in the daily schedule.

Use these questions to guide you as you choose daily learning experiences.

- **What is it about day and night that these children seem most curious about?**
This broad topic offers many possibilities to zoom in on areas of special interest. One group might be especially fascinated with changes in the day and night sky, while another group is more interested in exploring bedtime and wake-up routines. Let your observations and conversations with children be your guide as you choose experiences that invite children to pursue their interests and seek answers to their questions.
- **What are our learning goals for individual children and for the group as a whole?**
Choose experiences that support specific objectives for learning. Strive to create well-rounded plans that support all domains of development.
- **How can we extend children’s thinking and learning?**
Choose activities that can be connected to children’s experiences so far. Remember that it is often appropriate to re-run planned experiences. Offering an experience two or more times over a few days or weeks invites children to gain expertise and deepen their understanding.



Pair planned learning experiences with ample opportunities for open-ended, free choice exploration in the classroom and outdoors.

Sorting Day and Night

Let's think together about things we do at the beginning and end of our day.

Materials

- Copy of the day and night sorting cards found in this book
- Two blank sheets of paper per small group
- Markers



Prepare for this activity by printing or copying and cutting out the **sorting cards** found in this book. If desired, the cards may be mounted to chipboard and/or laminated or covered in clear contact paper. Shuffle the cards before you begin.

Explain to children that you have a set of cards with photographs and words. You would like their help sorting them. Show the children one of the blank sheets of paper. Tell them, this paper will say *day*. Name each letter – d-a-y – as you write the word at the top of the page. Ask, “What is a symbol that we could draw to remind us that this page says *day*?” Children may suggest a sun or some other symbol. You may draw the symbol on the page or invite a child to do so.

Next, show the children a second blank sheet of paper. Can they guess what this one will say? Name each letter – “n-i-g-h-t” – as you write the word at the top of the second page. Invite children to think of a symbol to draw to represent night.

Deal out the sorting cards, face down, to yourself and the children. Divide the cards evenly among the people in the small group. Model flipping over one of your cards, looking at the picture and reading the words aloud. Ask children to help you decide whether the event on the card *usually* happens in the daytime, or usually happens at night. Place your card on the matching page.

Assist children as they take turns sorting their cards. When all of the cards have been sorted, look together at the cards on each chart. Let children know that the sorting cards will be available in a play area later.

Sorting Day and Night (cont.)

Helpful Hints

Listen carefully as children talk through their sorting decisions. A child's choices may be guided by recent life experiences. For example, one card features a picture of a school bus with the words, "ride a bus". Most children will associate this with daytime, but a child who has recently taken an overnight bus trip to visit relatives may feel strongly that this card belongs in the nighttime set. In activities like this one, thinking and talking together are more important than getting "right" answers.

Including Every Explorer

- Sorting onto paper mats may be challenging for children with limited motor skills. Try using two trays. These can be labeled with sticky notes.
- If your group includes a child who is visually impaired, offer real objects that can be held and handled – sunglasses, fuzzy slippers, and so on.
- Reduce the number of cards for younger or less experienced preschoolers. If you observe children who seem bored or restless, the activity is too long. You could use half of the cards during one small group time and half during another. Or, try sorting one-on-one with individual children.
- Older, more experienced preschoolers may be interested in writing the words "day" and "night" themselves.

More to Do (optional)

- Count and compare the number of cards on each sorting mat.
- Invite children to think of other events that fit in each category. They may want to make their own picture and word cards to add to the set!

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Cognitive Development – CD 1.2, CD 2.4, CD 3.2

Emergent Literacy –EL 1.1, EL 3.1, EL 3.2

Science and Technology – ST 3.1

Social Studies – SS 2.1



fly a kite



ride a bus



pedal a tricycle



eat lunch



wear sunglasses



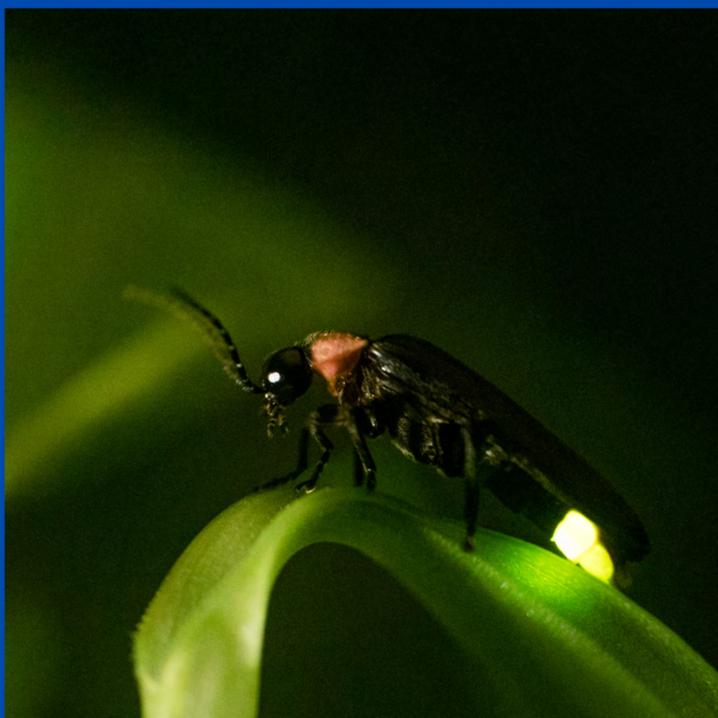
see a rainbow



see the moon



watch fireworks



catch a firefly



put on pajamas



use a flashlight



say goodnight

Exploring with Flashlights

Let's investigate flashlights and go on a low light adventure!

Materials

- Basket of assorted flashlights (at least one or two more flashlights than children in the small group)

Talk with children about what they know about flashlights. Flashlights are lights that we can carry in our hands. They are usually powered by batteries, and they are tools that let us see in dark places. What experiences have children had with flashlights? They might talk about using flashlights when camping or when the lights go out during a thunderstorm.

Invite children to investigate the flashlights in the basket. Notice together:

- How flashlights switch on and off.
- Which ones are brightest, and which are dim?
- Which ones have a narrow beam, and which ones have a wide beam.
- Other differences and similarities related to size, shape, color, and function.

This may be a good time to support children as they learn to ask for turns and trade materials: “May I use the tiny flashlight next?” and, “I’ll trade you the blue flashlight for the green one.”

After a period of open-ended exploration, invite each child to choose a flashlight to take on a walk. You’ll go together to another area where the lights are dim, but not totally dark. This could be another room, a hallway, a gymnasium, or any other child-safe space where you can turn out the lights. Invite children to investigate by walking around and shining their lights on things that interest them.

When you return to your room, talk with children about what they noticed while exploring with flashlights.

Helpful Hints

Ask colleagues to help build a collection of flashlights.
Families may be happy to help, too.

Exploring with Flashlights (cont.)

Including Every Explorer

Some children are frightened by dark places. If a child seems worried, invite him/her to hold your hand or walk next to you.

Some children may require one-on-one support to have a safe, satisfying experience outside their familiar classroom. If this is not possible, find a way to explore inside the classroom.

More to Do (optional)

- Hang pictures of nighttime (nocturnal) creatures in the place where children will explore. Have fun spotting owls, bats, opossums, and more!
- Create a flashlight exploration space in your classroom with the basket of flashlights and a large, open appliance box that children can crawl inside.

Did You Know?

This exploration may seem simple to adults, but we have far more experience with flashlights and dim places than children do! Children may investigate many different things, such as the examples below.

- How a flashlight beam moves when they move their arm.
- What happens when light shines on a window or mirror.
- How a beam of light changes as it moves closer to a surface that it is shining on.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Social and Emotional Development – SE 1.2, SE 2.1, SE 2.2

Cognitive Development – CD 1.1, CD 2.1

Science and Technology – ST 1.1, ST 3.2

Our Morning Book

Let's make a book about our daily routines. We'll think about things that happen at home.

Materials

- Drawing tools such as crayons and markers
- 3-hole punch
- 3-ring binder or 3-prong folder
- Copies **morning book page** and survey (optional)

You'll complete a **morning book page** with each child. Here are some examples.

Natalie's Morning

Grandpa wakes up Natalie.

Mornin', Sunshine!

It's time to wash your face, brush your teeth, and put on play clothes.

Ana's Morning

Mamá wakes up Ana.

¡Buenos días!

It's time to make your bed, feed your puppy, and go to school.

Henry's Morning

Jessie wakes up Henry.

Good morning!

It's time to put on clothes and help make breakfast.

Ms. Taylor's Morning

The alarm clock wakes up Ms. Taylor.

Good morning!

It's time to make the bed, drink some coffee, and go for a jog.

The **morning survey** found in this book can be used to interview or collect information from families. Or, interview children one at a time. Invite each child to write their name in the title of their page and draw a picture in the frame. Some children may want to add their own writing to the page, while others may describe their drawing while you write down what they say.

Show children how to use the 3-hole punch to make holes in their paper and help them add it to a binder or folder. Title the book, "Our Morning Book". The finished book can be placed in the classroom book area. During free play times, invite a few children at a time to read it with you.

Our Morning Book (cont.)

Including Every Explorer

- Sadly, some preschoolers experience traumatic life events that influence their feelings about routines at home. As you consider this activity, think about the children in your group. If a child has entered foster care or experienced another major change related to where – or with whom - they live, skip this activity and plan something else instead.
- Book-making supports children’s emergent literacy skills. In a typical preschool group, you may have some children who aren’t yet drawing representationally and other children who draw identifiable pictures. Some children may use letter-like forms to represent words, and some children may write using invented spelling. Strive to meet each child where they are with acceptance, encouragement, and scaffolded support. You may wish to research more about the [stages of preschool writing development](#).
- If you have families who speak languages other than English at home, respectfully ask for their help as you learn to pronounce their family’s morning greeting.

More to Do (optional)

Invite families to share photos of their child’s morning routine to add to the book. If children enjoy making and sharing their morning book, consider making a book about nighttime routines, too.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Social and Emotional Development – SE 3.1, SE 3.2

Emergent Literacy – EL 1.1, EL 1.2, EL 3.1, EL 3.2, EL 3.3

Social Studies – SS 1.1, SS 2.1

Creativity and Aesthetics – CA 2.1

Our Morning Survey



Our class is making a book about morning routines.
Please tell us about how your child starts the day.

Someone who wakes up your child in the morning:

Do you say **good morning**? Or **rise and shine**? Or something else?

Our family's good morning greeting: _____

What are some things that your child does every morning?

Our Morning Survey



Our class is making a book about morning routines.
Please tell us about how your child starts the day.

Someone who wakes up your child in the morning:

Do you say **good morning**? Or **rise and shine**? Or something else?

Our family's good morning greeting: _____

What are some things that your child does every morning?

Morning



_____ wakes up _____.

_____!

It's time to _____

_____.

Noticing Day and Night

Let's look for clues in favorite picture books.

Materials

- Collection of classroom books
- Sticky notes
- Marker

Begin by collecting a stack of picture books that include daytime or nighttime settings. All of the books listed at right have clear evidence of daytime or nighttime settings, and you'll find many other examples in your book storage area.

Choose one of the books to show to the children in your small group. Show a page from the book. Ask children whether the story is set in the daytime or at night. How can they tell?

Encourage the children to look through the collection of books at their own pace. They can let you know when they find clues! Write "day", "night", or "both" on sticky notes that children can apply to the covers of the books they have looked through. Sort the books into three piles.

As children work, talk together about the many different clues they find in the illustrations, such as:

- Illustrator's use of bright or dark colors
- Sun and blue sky or moon and stars
- Nighttime (nocturnal) or daytime (diurnal) animals
- Streetlights, headlights, flashlights
- Clothing worn by characters
- Events that usually happen during the day or at night

Classic Books with Evidence of Day and/or Night

Caps for Sale

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom

Click, Clack Moo

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs

Corduroy

Freight Train

Giraffes Can't Dance

Go, Dog, Go

Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site

Goodnight Moon

Guess How Much I Love You

Ira Sleeps Over

Is Your Momma a Llama?

Last Stop on Market Street

Madeline

Over in the Meadow

Stellaluna

Strega Nona

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble

Ten, Nine, Eight

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Where The Wild Things Are

Noticing Day and Night (cont.)

Helpful Hints

Don't limit yourself to books that are especially about day and night. All sorts of stories can be used, as long as the illustrations offer clues about the time of day.

It's easy to get lost in a good book! Expect that some children may get distracted as they notice interesting illustrations and remember favorite stories. Use gentle strategies – such as asking whether the child sees a moon or sun in an illustration – to help remind them of the task at hand. Or, simply save the sorting experience for another time. We never want to discourage children who are enjoying books.

Including Every Explorer

Younger and/or less experienced preschoolers may be most successful with one-on-one support. Find a comfortable place to sit together as investigate books in a warm, informal manner.

Older and/or more experienced preschoolers may be interested in writing on the sticky notes and in comparing the piles of books. Did you find more daytime books? Or more nighttime books? How many books took place during both day and night?

More to Do (optional)

- Continue to talk about setting when you read books together in the days and weeks to come. In addition to talking about day and night, you can talk about whether stories take place indoors or outdoors, and in the city or in the country.
- Remind children that they can add clues about the time of day to their artwork. This could include using particular colors or adding details to the illustrations.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Cognitive Development – CD 1.2, CD 2.4, CD 3.1, CD 3.2

Language Development – LD 2.1, LD 3.1

Emergent Literacy – EL 1.1, EL 1.2, EL 3.1

Social Studies – SS 2.1

Sunshine Smoothies

Let's make a sweet, creamy treat that reminds us of breakfast time. Always wash hands and clean tables before food experiences.

Materials

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Optional: toy play food | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice cube |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of the sunshine smoothie recipe | <input type="checkbox"/> Ice tongs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vanilla yogurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Blender |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Orange juice | <input type="checkbox"/> Small cups, such as 3 oz. paper cups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bananas – 1 per small group | <input type="checkbox"/> Straws – cut short with clean scissors |

Talk with the small group about foods that people usually eat for breakfast and foods that people usually eat for dinner. You might want to begin by looking together at toy play food from your dramatic play area. Is a hamburger usually a breakfast food or a dinner food? How about salad? Waffles? Eggs? Corn? Encourage children to help brainstorm lists of breakfast foods and dinner foods.

Have any of the children had a smoothie before? A smoothie is a blended food that is sort of like a milkshake. Many people eat smoothies for breakfast.

Introduce the blender to the children. Explain that the blender pitcher has a small, sharp blade in the bottom that spins very quickly. When adding ingredients to the blender, we do not put our fingers or spoons down near the bottom of the pitcher. **Do not plug in the blender until all ingredients have been added and the lid is on.**

Invite children to help you read the recipe. Involve them in several of the following ways.

- Offering each child a task:
 - Peeling the banana and adding it to the pitcher
 - Measuring and adding juice and yogurt
 - Using ice tongs to add ice cubes; counting ice cubes as they are added
- Looking together at labels on the juice and yogurt containers.
- Noticing the numbered steps and thinking about the sequence of the recipe. What did we do first? What did we do next?
- Asking children to predict what will happen when the ingredients are blended.

Sunshine Smoothies (cont.)

Let children know that the blender might be noisy. If they don't like the noise, they can put their hands over their ears. Encourage children to watch closely to notice what happens when the blender starts. Build playful anticipation by counting down, "3...2...1...Go!" before starting the blender.

Pour small tasting portions of the smoothie into cups and enjoy! Encourage children to describe how their smoothies smell and taste.

Helpful Hints

This learning experience accommodates up to four children comfortably, with each child completing one of the tasks on the recipe. Consider inviting children to sign up for a turn in a group that will meet in the morning or afternoon. It can be hard to wait for a turn, but a sign-up sheet helps reassure children that their turn is coming,

Including Every Explorer

Match tasks to the motor skills of the children in the group. In this recipe, pouring juice is the simplest task and using ice tongs is the most challenging task.

If a child in your group is sensitive to noise, they may be disturbed by the blender – even when they are playing elsewhere in the room. Headphones can help reduce noise.

If a child in your group has a dairy allergy or sensitivity, use non-dairy yogurt. Or, skip this recipe in favor of another favorite, such as scrambled eggs or slow cooker oatmeal.

More to Do (optional)

- Send a copy of the smoothie recipe home with each child.
- Invite children to look through home and cooking magazines to cut out pictures of breakfast and dinner foods. Make collages on paper plates.
- Add clean, empty food containers representing breakfast and dinner foods to your dramatic play area. Consider adding cookbooks or recipe cards, too.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

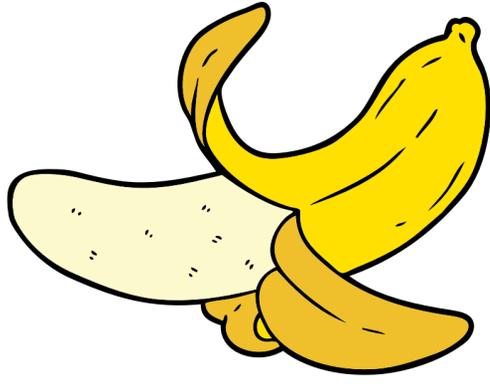
Cognitive Development – CD 2.3, CD 2.4, CD 3.1

Mathematical Thinking – MT 3.1

Physical Health and Development - PH 2.1, PH 2.2, PH 3.1, PH 3.2

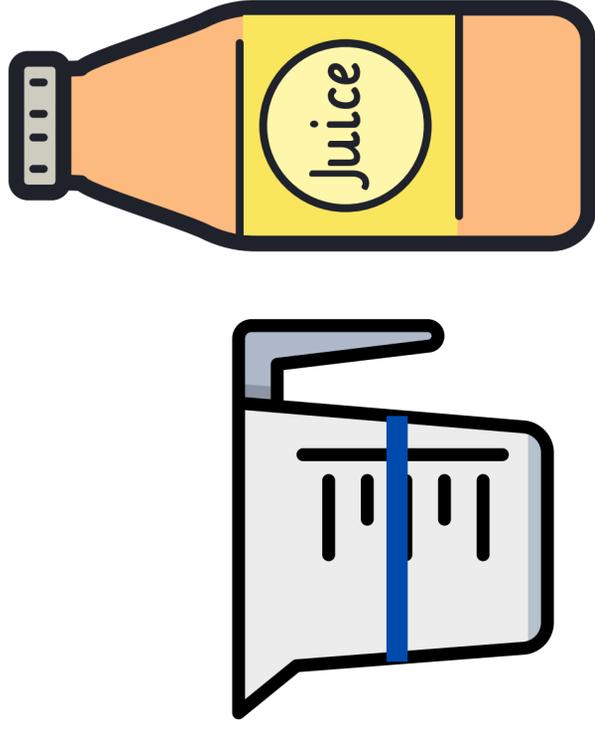
Sunshine Smoothie

1.



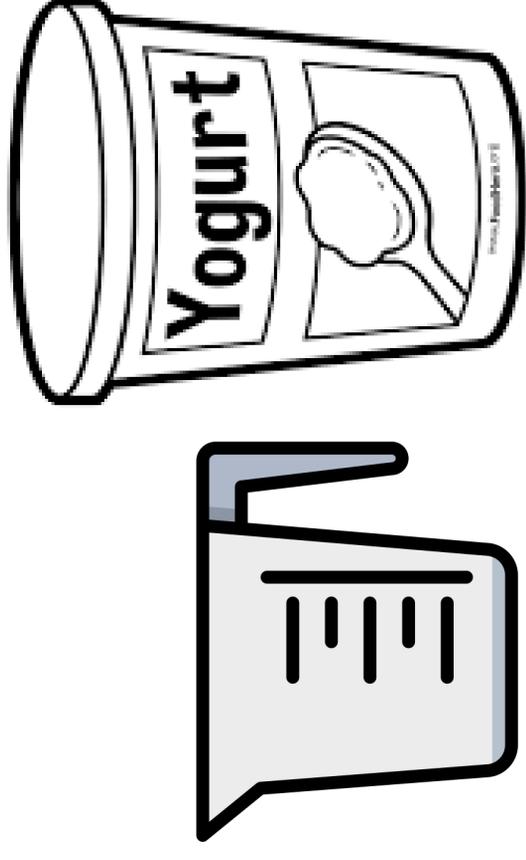
First add 1 banana.

3.



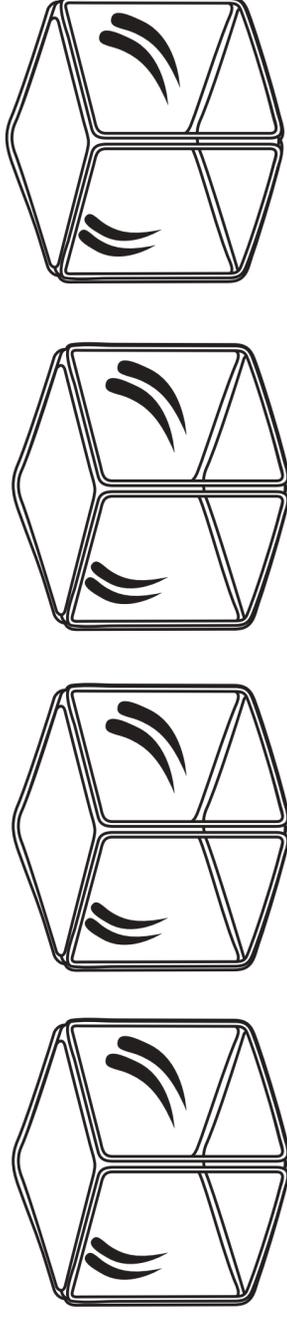
Then add 1/2 cup of
orange juice.

2.



Next, add 1 cup of yogurt.

4.



Last, add 4 ice cubes.

Storytelling Set: Goodnight Gorilla

Let's work together to create props for retelling a simple story.

Materials

- Book: *Goodnight Gorilla* by Peggy Rathmann
- Plastic or wooden toy zoo animals: gorilla, lion, elephant, and giraffe
- A set of real or toy keys
- A small, working flashlight
- A pair of people figures – dollhouse or Duplo people work well
- Additional art and building materials for children to choose from

This experience works well with up to four small groups of children. It is best suited to the abilities of older preschoolers. Each group will play a different role in creating a complete set of storytelling props.

Group 1 (up to 3 children)

Read the book together. Look together at the toy zoo animals. Who is missing? Invite children to think of ways to create the missing characters: hyena, armadillo, and mouse. Children can look closely at the book's illustrations as they create these characters from construction paper or air-drying clay. Children may want to look for photos of less familiar animals.

Group 2 (up to 7 children)

Read the book together. Show the children the characters created by the first group. What do the animals need? Cages! Children may want to use small boxes and other art materials to create cages, or they may wish to build cages out of interlocking blocks like Lego or Duplo. Focus on math conversations: Will the characters fit in the cages?

Group 3 (up to 4 children)

Read the book together. Show children the characters and cages created by the other groups. What else is missing? A bed! Work together to make a bed. One child can make the bed, another can make pillows, while a third makes sheets and a fourth makes a blanket.

Group 4 (up to 6 children)

Read the book together. Show the children the props made by the other groups. What else is missing? Look closely at the illustrations to generate ideas such as locks or toys for the cages, a banana, a lamp for the bedroom, a hat for the zookeeper, or even a path. Children may use construction paper and other art materials to make these props, or they may think of other materials around the classroom to use.

Goodnight Gorilla (cont.)

Gather the whole group of children. Reread the story, admiring the prop set created by all of the groups. Explain that book and prop set will be available for children to use during free play.

Helpful Hints

Provide flexible, unhurried time for this experience. Some children may work very quickly, while others spend much more time on their work. Some children may wish to keep working after their small group time concludes.

Before children begin playing with the props, explain that the handmade props are fragile. Instruct them to handle these items gently, but also remind them that accidents happen. Tape and glue can be used to mend props if needed.

Including Every Explorer

This is a complex project that may not be a fit for all preschool classes. You may wish to invite children to groups based on abilities. Group 2 offers the least complex task.

With younger and less experienced preschool groups, it may be more successful to create a storytelling basket with commercial and/or teacher-created props. Engage children in the less complicated experience of helping retell the story.

More to Do (optional)

- Record a video of children using the props to retell the story.
- Invite children to create masks and/or costumes to act out the story.

Did You Know?

These experiences foster collaboration as children work together to accomplish a shared goal.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Social and Emotional Development – SE 1.2, SE 3.2

Cognitive Development – CD 2.2, CD 2.4, CD 3.1, CD 3.2

Emergent Literacy – EL 1.1, EL 1.2, EL 3.1

Creativity and Aesthetics – CA 2.1, CA 3.1

Sun and Moon Patterns

Let's explore the pattern of day and night.

Materials

- At least 6 yellow tennis balls
- At least 6 white golf balls
- Basket to hold golf and tennis balls
- Photo of day/sun and photo of night/moon

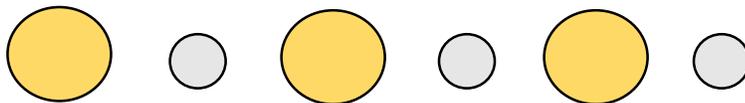
In this patterning activity, tennis balls represent the sun and golf balls represent the moon. Tell a simple story, such as the story below.

(Child's name) woke up. She looked out the window and saw the bright sun in the sky. (Place a tennis ball on the table.) She played all day.

At the end of the long day, she had dinner, took a bath, and put on her pajamas. She looked out the window and saw the bright moon in the sky. (Place a golf ball on the table next to the tennis ball.) She crawled into bed and went to sleep.

The next morning, she woke up. She looked out the window and what do you think she saw? (Place another tennis ball next to the golf ball.)

Invite children to continue the pattern with the remaining tennis balls and golf balls. Touch each ball as you read the pattern: day, night, day, night, day...



Continue the activity in one or more of the following ways, depending on the ages and interests of your group.

- Invite children to participate in a movement pattern. As you or a child touch each tennis ball and say *day*, children jog in place to represent play. As you touch each golf ball and say “night”, children place their head on their hands to represent sleep. Go slowly at first, and then go fast for fun!
- Think together: Can you always see the sun in the sky in the daytime?
- Count and compare the number of suns and moons. Count the combined number of suns and moons. Touch each one as you count from left to right.
- Think together: Does the moon always look round, like a ball? How does it change?

Sun and Moon Patterns (cont.)

Helpful Hints

Consider using practice (wiffle) golf balls. These hollow, lightweight balls can be repurposed in many ways for indoor and outdoor play.

Many tennis clubs and high school tennis teams are happy to donate used tennis balls. If needed, tennis balls can be cleaned in a clothes washing machine. Wash on the delicate cycle with mild detergent and lukewarm water, then dry on low heat.

Including Every Explorer

You can keep balls from rolling around the table by placing each one on a stand made of a napkin ring or a 1” piece of cardboard towel tube. This makes them much easier to place in a row.

Some younger children, and children with impulsive behaviors, may find it very hard to resist playing with the golf and tennis balls during this activity. Allow ample free exploration time with tennis balls and wiffle golf balls before using them for a structured activity. It may also help to give the child an extra ball that they can hold during the activity.

Older and/or more experienced children may enjoy talking with you about the meanings of the words *yesterday*, *today*, and *tomorrow*. Seven sun/moon pairs can be used to represent the 24-hour cycle of the days of the week.

More to Do (optional)

- As a free choice option, offer long strips of paper adding machine tape. Larger and smaller cut paper circles can be glued to represent the sun and moon pattern.
- If children are interested in how the moon changes, hang a chart of moon phases and/or a lunar calendar. The free [Moon](#) app is another way to check the moon each day.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Cognitive Development – CD 2.1, CD 3.2

Mathematical Thinking – MT 1.1, MT 2.1, MT 3.1

Science and Technology – ST 2.1

Social Studies – SS 2.1

Tracking Shadows

Let's find out whether shadows change during the day. This experience should be planned on a sunny day without much wind.

Materials

- Chalk **or** markers and large sheets of white paper
- Plastic toy animals or other sturdy toys
- If paper is used, rocks, bean bags or other weights
- Tablet computer (optional)

This experience requires at least two stages: morning and afternoon. If desired, four stages can occur: early and late morning, and early and late afternoon.

In the morning, take the small group outside to a sunny place where they can work safely. They'll either work on concrete with chalk or use paper and markers on another flat surface. If paper is used, weight down the corners so that it doesn't blow away.

Invite each child to choose a toy. Experiment with placing the toys so that they cast a shadow on the paper. Once you find just the right spot, the toys will not be moved again. Encourage children to use chalk or marker to trace the outline of their animal's shadow. Leave the animals outside.

Later in the day, revisit the outdoor work area. Invite children to look at the toys and their shadows. Has anything changed? Trace the toy shadows again. This can be repeated several more times in the same day if desired.

Bring the toys and tracings indoors. Talk together about how the shadows changed during the day. Do children have any theories about why this might have happened?

If you have a tablet computer, watch a short [time-lapse video](#)* taken over the course of a day. Explain to children that someone recorded the video by leaving a camera in the same place all day long. Then, they used a computer to speed up the video to show a whole day in just one minute! What do children notice about the sun and shadows in the video?

*When using video platforms with advertisements, always start videos ahead of time, pausing at the beginning of the content that you want children to see. This helps protect children from potentially inappropriate advertisements.

Helpful Hints

If your group shares an outdoor play area with other groups, choose a different place for this experiment. Otherwise, the toys and papers are likely to be moved by playing children.

You may also work with children to make a sign that says, "Experiment in progress. Do not disturb" to place near their work.

Tracking Shadows (cont.)

Including Every Explorer

Changes in routine – such as going outdoors at an unexpected time - can be hard for some children. Telling the story of what will happen with words and simple pictures will help children understand what to expect.

If a child with disabilities is unable to use tracing tools at ground level, have him/her stand or sit in a sunny place. Take a photo of the child that includes his/her shadow. Make a mark on the ground and return to photograph them in the exact, same spot several times during the day. Print or display the photos together to notice changes.

More to Do (optional)

- Take photos of children at work to display alongside their tracings.
- Try tracing or photographing the shadows of trees, fence posts, or other familiar outdoor objects.
- Look for outdoor shadows on a cloudy day. Where did they go? Notice what happens when the sun can be seen again.
- If children show a special interest in tracing shadows, create a shadow tracing station with an LED (cool touch) desk lamp, paper, and chalk or crayons. Children can bring materials from around the classroom to trace and experiment with moving the lamp to change the shadows.
- Invite a tech-savvy colleague or family member to help you create a time-lapse video of your outdoor play area. A durable GoPro-type camera works well.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Physical Development and Health – PH 2.2

Mathematical Thinking – MT 3.1, MT 4.1

Science and Technology – ST 2.1, ST 3.2, ST 3.3

Social Studies – SS 2.1

Day and Night Globe

Let's think about why we experience day and night.

Materials

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sturdy globe | <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Star or dot sticker | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo of daytime and photo of nighttime |

Show children the globe and ask what they know about it. The globe represents our planet, Earth. The blue represents water – mostly oceans – while the other colors represent land. A globe is like a map, but it is shaped like a round sphere – just like the Earth.

The globe is a small model of our earth but really, our Earth is huge! It's so large that a whole city is just a tiny dot on the globe. To help show approximately where on Earth we live, place a sticker on the globe.

Have a child shine a flashlight on the sticker on the globe. Explain that the flashlight represents the bright sun. Encourage children to notice what happens as you move the globe. The child with the flashlight should hold it steady. Slowly turn the globe counterclockwise so that the countries move to the east.

Children will notice that the sticker representing home has moved away from the light, into the dark. As you continue to slowly turn the globe, it will come around into the light again. Explain that the sun doesn't go away, but Earth rotates (turns). When the part of Earth where we live turns away from the sun, we experience darkness. As the Earth continues to turn, we experience daytime again.

You may wish to conclude the activity here. Or, if children seem highly interested, try one of the following expansions.

- Does everyone on earth experience nighttime at the same time? How can you tell? Some children may have family members who live far away. Have they talked with them about the time of day?
- Daytime begins with sunrise and ends with sunset. Nighttime begins with sunset and ends with sunrise. Can children watch the light as the globe slowly turns to identify sunrise and sunset near the sticker?
- Nighttime is often cooler while daytime is warmer. Why might that be? Children may recall that some light sources give off heat and/or may associate the sun with warmth.

Day and Night Globe (cont.)

Helpful Hints/Including Every Explorer

The concept that we live on an immense Earth that rotates in space as it orbits around the sun is far too abstract for most preschoolers! Even if they learn to recite these facts, they can't truly understand them.

This small group learning experience is included in this curriculum because most young children enjoy the cause-and-effect experimentation of shining a light on the moving globe. It can help reinforce their understanding of the pattern of day and night while providing reassurance that sunlight always returns.

When sharing this activity with children, ensure that the tone is relaxed and engaging. Watch children for cues, focusing with enthusiasm on the parts they seem interested in and concluding the activity before they seem restless.

More to Do (optional)

- Place the globe and flashlight in your science area for children to use during free choice time.
- If children seem interested in maps, add an atlas to your book area.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Cognitive Development – CD 1.1, CD 2.1, CD 2.4, CD 3.2

Language Development – LD 1.1, LD 2.1, LD 3.1

Science and Technology – ST 1.1, ST 2.1, ST 3.2

Social Studies – SS 2.1

Sunset Paintings

Let's make paintings inspired by a beautiful sunset.

Materials

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photo(s) of sunset | <input type="checkbox"/> Paintbrushes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large sheets of white paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Cups or bowls for paints |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Liquid watercolor or tempera paints | <input type="checkbox"/> Tablecloth or another protective table cover |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bowl of water and blotting cloth | <input type="checkbox"/> Smocks or large t-shirts to protect children's clothing |

Look together at a photo of the sunset. What colors do children notice in the sky? Work together to fill cups or bowls with the colors that children see. White or black paint can be added to make colors lighter or darker. You may end up with several shades of the same color.

Invite children to paint with the sunset colors. They may wish to make long strokes to fill their pages with color, like a sunset sky. Let children know that it is OK to paint all the way to the edge of the page, even if paint gets on the table. Show children how to use a bowl of water and a blotting cloth to clean brushes as desired.

Sit quietly with children as they paint or make a sky-inspired painting of your own. Try not to interrupt children when they are focused on their work. There may be opportunities to support social development as children ask for turns with different colors of paint.

When children indicate with words or gestures that they are ready for you to look at their work, talk together in some of these ways:

- Noticing color choices – “You’ve used a lot of yellow near the top of your page.”
- Noticing how colors mix and blend – “What has happened here, where you painted pink on top of the blue?”
- Noticing lines and patterns – “It looks like you moved your brush up and down.”
- Asking about the process – “How did you make this deep, dark color?”

Place finished paintings in a safe place to dry.

Sunset Paintings (cont.)

Helpful Hints

Not every child will want to paint a sunset-inspired picture. Some children may be satisfied with a few dots of paint on their page. Others may want to paint something completely different, like a self-portrait or a rainbow. That's OK.

We can make suggestions to children when we say things like, "Perhaps you would like to paint a sunset sky." However, decisions about the subject of the painting ultimately belong to the artist (the child.)

Including Every Explorer

Blue masking tape can be used to tape the paper to the table. This helps keep it from sliding around as children work.

Some children naturally stand up when they work at the table. This makes it easier to reach and gives more freedom to use the whole arm. Unused chairs can be tucked out of the way when children prefer to stand.

Predictable verbal cues can help children learn new procedures. For example, if you would like to help a child remember to tap the extra water from his paintbrush, model tapping three times while saying, "tap, tap, tap." Then give the child a chance to try: "tap, tap, tap." Repeat this cue consistently over time to help the child adopt the new habit.

More to Do (optional)

- Display sunset photos alongside children's sunset-inspired paintings.
- Add the leftover sunset-colored paint to your easel.
- If desired, children can cut characters, buildings, or landscape features from black construction paper to glue to their dried paintings. Look together at photographs where the subject in the foreground appears dark against the bright sky.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Physical Development and Health – PH 2.1, PH 2.2

Language Development – LD 1.1, LD 2.1, LD 3.1

Creativity and Aesthetics – CA 2.1

Investigating Day and Night Homes

Where do night animals go in the daytime? Where do daytime animals go at night? Let's go outdoors to investigate animal homes.

Materials

- Clipboards with white paper – one per child
- Pencils or washable black fine-tipped markers – one per child
- Investigator's Kit - backpack with a tape measure, ruler, flashlights, magnifying glasses, small notepad and pencil
- If available, factual books about nighttime (nocturnal) and daytime (diurnal) animals

Talk with children about what they know about nighttime and daytime animals. Make a list of local animals that are active at night. This list might include firefly, raccoon, opossum, owl, cricket, bat, and more.

If these animals are active at night, when do they sleep? And where do they sleep? Listen closely to children's theories and questions.

Go outside to investigate a nature space in your outdoor play area or near your school. Nature spaces can include wooded areas, single trees, garden areas, or areas where grass and weeds grow taller. There are many possibilities.

Talk with children about where a small night creature – such as a cricket or mouse – might live. Look together for holes and other protected areas. Children can make sketches of the places they identify as possible shelters. They may also want to use tools from their Investigator's Kit.

Depending on your nature space, you may also be able to look for shelter that could be home to larger nocturnal animals such as owls or raccoons. Look for hollows and holes in large trees, and notice fallen trees or rocky areas where an animal might make a den. This part of the investigation is "eyes only." Remind children that it isn't safe to put their hands into places where they cannot see. Also, you don't want to do anything to disturb nocturnal animals who may be present. They need their sleep!

What about creatures that are active during the day, such as butterflies, turtles, songbirds, and chipmunks? Where do children think they might sleep at night?

When you return to the classroom, take a few moments to debrief by talking together about what you saw and heard. Children may want you to write descriptive captions on their sketches. Older groups of preschoolers may be interested in telling classmates about their investigation as part of a regularly scheduled whole group gathering.

Investigating Day and Night Homes (cont.)

Helpful Hints

Some programs have more access to nature spaces than others, but almost every program can find a little bit of nature wherever they area. Even one tree can inspire rich conversations and investigations.

Including Every Explorer

Think of ways to provide extra supervision for children with more impulsive behavior. This could be a good opportunity for family volunteers. The activity can be shortened as needed to ensure that every child has a successful experience.

Some children's sketches may not be identifiable to adults yet, but every line on the page has meaning to the child. Praise effort and invite all children to tell about their work. Avoid judging or comparing one child's work against another's. If you have a child with limited use of hands, offer adaptive drawing tools that are easier to hold and handle.

During investigations, pay close attention to children's non-verbal cues. This is valuable with all children, but especially important when a child in the group does not yet speak English or is not yet verbal. Notice where the child looks, paying attention to facial expressions and changes in body language. Look together and talk with the child about what seems to have caught their attention.

More to Do (optional)

- Help children use books and/or digital resources to research local animals that they show a special interest in.
- Listen to recordings of the chirps and calls of nighttime creatures. Children may also want to begin listening to a recording of relaxing night sounds at rest time.
- Try to capture some nocturnal animal tracks. If you don't have a naturally muddy area outside your fenced play area, create one. Choose a shady place. Clear twigs and leaves to expose a broad patch of bare ground. Add water and work the dirt until you have mud, but not a puddle. Place a bowl of apple wedges in the middle of the mud patch. The next day, return to see if the apples are gone. Are there any tracks in the mud? If so, use an animal track guide to identify your nighttime visitor. You may need to repeat this experiment several times before you get tracks.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Cognitive Development – CD 1.1, CD 2.1, CD 2.3, CD 3.2

Mathematical Thinking – MT 3.1

Social Studies – SS 1.1

Observing Fireflies

What can we learn by looking closely at these tiny, summertime creatures?

Materials

- Prepared bug box with real fireflies
- Magnifying glasses (aka hand lenses)
- Sketching materials

Set up a bug box with gravel in the bottom topped by some twigs and leaves. This container should have small air holes. Soak one or two cotton balls with water, squeezing out any excess before adding to the bug box. Insects can drown in open containers of water; damp cotton balls are a safer way for them to drink.

To prepare for this activity, an adult will need to gently capture fireflies to add to the prepared bug box. Because fireflies are nocturnal, they are only active at night.

Place the bug box on a low table where children can observe the fireflies. Have children ever seen or caught fireflies at night? Provide magnifying glasses for a closer look. Talk together about firefly features – such as antennae, wing covers (shell), and legs. Children may notice the fireflies’ large eyes or forked feet. Also, talk together about what you see the fireflies doing. Are they crawling, climbing, flying, or standing still?

Some children may not realize that these little insects are the source of the yellow-green blinking lights that they see in tall grass or treetops at night. Look closely to spot a firefly’s yellowish lantern at the end of its abdomen. Invite children to make sketches showing what they notice about the fireflies. Write down children’s questions about the fireflies. What do they wonder?

Your fireflies probably won’t blink in the classroom... until you turn out the light. Once each small group has had a chance to observe the fireflies, dim the lights and watch for their light. Your fireflies may be active all through rest time.

As with all wild creatures, show kindness and respect by only keeping fireflies in the classroom for a short while. After rest time, take them outside and set them free. You may want to conclude this experience by watching a brief clip of [fireflies in nature](#)*. Children may enjoy thinking about their classroom fireflies joining others to put on a nighttime light show!

*When using video platforms with advertisements, always start videos ahead of time, pausing at the beginning of the content that you want children to see. This helps protect children from potentially inappropriate advertisements.

Observing Fireflies (cont.)

Helpful Hints

Fireflies are active in Arkansas from June to September. They begin to blink at dusk and remain active into the night. They can be found around large trees and in areas where taller grass grows.

Including Every Explorer

If your group includes a child with limited use of hands, offer adaptive drawing tools or invite the child to help take photographs of the fireflies.

Foam can be wrapped and taped around narrow magnifying glass handles to make them easier to hold.

More to Do (optional)

- Some people know fireflies as lightning bugs. Help children take a poll of family members or adults around their school: “Do you say ‘firefly’ or ‘lightning bug’?”
- Invite older and/or more experienced preschoolers to sketch the fireflies with fine-line permanent markers. They can use watercolor paints to add color to their line drawings.
- Hang a string of softly blinking twinkle lights in your classroom. Turn them on at rest time and other quiet times. Do the lights remind children of fireflies?
- Use books or digital resources to help children find answers to their questions about fireflies. You might even be able to find an insect expert – such as an entomologist from a local college or a ranger from a nature center – who would be willing to visit to answer children’s questions.

Did You Know?

If there are no fireflies in parks or yards where you live, it may be because of pesticides. Many of the same pesticides that are sprayed to reduce mosquito populations are also toxic to fireflies.

This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:

Language Development – LD 1.1, LD 2.1, LD 3.1

Science and Technology – ST 1.1, ST 3.1, ST 3.2, ST 3.3

Active Physical Play – Day and Night

Invite children to join in activities such as these during outdoor play times. Some children will want to come and play, while others will prefer to continue with their own, free choice activities. Some activities found in this section may also be appropriate for indoor gross motor play or active group gatherings.

Go to Sleep Little Children – a traditional game

Call out, “Go to sleep, little children, go to sleep!”
Players drop to the ground and pretend to sleep.

Wake the children by calling out, “Wake up, little bunnies, wake up!”
Children hop around the play space like rabbits until you call, “Go to sleep, little bunnies, go to sleep!”

Continue with other animals – crawling turtles, flitting hummingbirds, hopping toads, and more!

Sunshine Toss

Hold a hula hoop out at arm’s length or hang it from an outdoor structure. Invite children to toss tennis balls or other lightweight balls through the hoop.

As a variation, children can play catch by tossing a ball back and forth through the hoop.

Shadow (Un)Freeze Tag

An adult is “it” in this tag game. If they tag a running child, the child must immediately freeze. Other children can release (unfreeze) the child by touching their shadow.

Glow Stick Dance Party

This indoor gross motor activity can be enjoyed in a dim (but not totally dark) classroom or gym. Give each child a glow stick, turn on your favorite music, and dance!

Growing Every Day: Supporting Social and Emotional Development

Carol Evans, A-State Conscious Discipline Coach

It's Khiela's second week in her new pre-k classroom. Although teachers in the 3-year-old room described Khiela as a cheerful, helpful child, she has struggled this week. Now, it's the beginning of rest time. As the classroom settles down around her, Khiela kneels on her cot, tossing her stuffed toy rabbit into the air. "I'm not sleepy! I'm NOT going to sleep!", she announces loudly – right before she yawns.

Mrs. Reed, the teaching assistant, stifles a groan. She looks forward to the time after lunch when children are resting quietly. It's a chance to mentally recharge after the busy morning and prepare for the afternoon. When a child is needy during this time it can be frustrating.

Mrs. Reed reminds herself that this is hard for Khiela, too. Not only is she getting used to a new classroom with unfamiliar classmates and teachers, but she recently moved to live with grandparents while her mother is away. There have been a lot of changes in her life. Mrs. Reed understands that Khiela needs her. If she can give her extra time now, the outcome will be better for both of them.

Khiela's actions may seem playful at first glance, but as Mrs. Reed approaches she sees that Khiela's eyes look wild and worried. Mrs. Reed pauses and takes a deep, calming breath. When she feels her heart rate slow down, she sits by Khiela's cot. "Hey, Khiela," she says, in a soft, quiet tone. She pats Khiela's pillow as she asks, "Would you like to be covered or uncovered?" Khiela hands her the blanket, and Mrs. Reed covers her up.

Mrs. Reed sits quietly, rocking to the rhythm of the background music as she rubs Khiela's back. She's aware that Khiela is watching her intently. Mrs. Reed takes another deep, calming breath, and hears Khiela take a deep breath in response. Gradually, she feels Khiela's body relax beneath the blanket. She's drifting off to sleep.

Mrs. Reed smiles. The satisfaction of a job well done is full of peace.

Mrs. Reed supported Khiela's social-emotional development when she:

- Met Khiela where she was, recognizing that life changes often bring anxious feelings.
- Intentionally calmed herself so that she could help Khiela calm.
- Offered Khiela simple choices within the context of the predictable routine, rather than scolding her or engaging in an argument.



Even More Day and Night Experiences

- Begin a new classroom tradition of marking the full moon and new moon on a calendar.
- Plan a pretend campout. If the weather is mild and you have shade available, you might even bring cots outdoors for rest time.
- Having a class pajama day. Share favorite stuffed animal friends and bedtime stories and make breakfast for lunch.
- If you're planning to explore this topic in July, expect children to be excited about fireworks. You may want to spend extra time talking about what fireworks are and how to be safe around them. Children will be eager to talk, write, draw, and create artwork inspired by fireworks.

Recommended Reading for July 4th

The Night Before the 4th of July

Natasha Wing and Amy Wummer, Grosset and Dunlap, 2015

Red, White, and Boom!

Lee Wardlaw and Huy Voun Lee, Henry Holt & Co., 2012

Notes:

Concluding Your Day and Night Exploration

1. With your teaching team, think about, and discuss these questions.

What new experiences have our children had during this exploration? What new knowledge and skills have developed?

Do the children seem ready to conclude this exploration? Have their questions been answered? Is their interest waning? If children are still excited about day and night, think about ways to continue and extend the exploration.

How can we document children's learning and help children share what they have learned with others?

Your day and night exploration might end with one of these activities.

- Hosting a family engagement event. For example, the day and night exploration might conclude with evening star gazing. Plan for a clear night with a large moon. If you do not want to organize an event of your own, encourage families to join you at an event hosted by a local state park or nature center.
- Creating a book of photos of activities and/or children's drawings about day a night. The book can be added to the classroom library and/or copies can be made for each family.
- Using art materials to create a large nighttime mural or large models of the sun and moon to hang from your classroom ceiling.

2. Talk with children about their favorite memories about day and night. Model gratitude by creating thank you cards or letters to the families, school members, and community members who supported your exploration.
3. Where will you go next? Use your observations and conversations with children to help you plan your next exploration!

Using Explorers Preschool Curriculum

Explorers Preschool Curriculum (EPC) is designed for early childhood educators and preschool-aged children. It can be used in any setting, including private preschool programs, public school programs, and family child care homes.

EPC Guiding Principles

1. Children are naturally curious and eager to understand their world.

The *Explorers* curriculum promotes authentic, enjoyable, first-hand experiences in a vibrant and encouraging environment.

2. Domains of child development are interrelated and are all important.

Physical, cognitive, communicative, social, and emotional development are all vital for success in school and life. *Explorers* supports the *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards (CDELS)* with engaging experiences that promote learning across all domains.

3. Children are trustworthy partners in learning.

Explorers is inquiry-driven, guided by children's interests, questions, and ideas. Children take on meaningful decision-making roles and responsibilities as a part of each investigation. The child's right to play is protected and supported as fundamental component of every day.

4. Each child, and each group of children, are unique.

Explorers offers choices and flexibility for children and adults. Individualization to include children with developmental differences and special needs is integral to the curriculum.

5. Learning happens best within the context of family, community, and the natural world.

Explorers strives to promote positive connection between preschool-aged children and their school, community, and environment. Diverse and meaningful opportunities for family engagement are given special importance.

For professional development support with Explorers Preschool Curriculum, please contact Marcy White, MWhite@AState.edu

Big Ideas from EPC

Explorers may be different from other curricula you've used in several ways. Understanding these differences will help you use the curriculum successfully.

Explorers includes a collection of topics for investigation. These topics include, but are not limited to:

- Bubbles
- Day and Night
- Farmers' Market
- Insects
- Making Music
- Ramps and Tunnels
- Songbirds and Squirrels
- Trees

Each topic supports children's real-life, firsthand experiences.

Topics of learning – known as investigations – do not have to occur in a predetermined order. Instead, educators are urged to observe, talk with, and think about children in their group. Which of the topics would be most interesting and engaging to this group of children? Decisions may also be guided by the resources that are accessible to the program. Programs may choose to participate in any of the investigations, in any order.

Within broad topics, individual groups are urged to “zoom in” and focus most intently on areas of special interest. For example, one group taking part in a *day and night* investigation might be most interested in city lights that shine though the dark. A second group might be more interested in nighttime creatures like crickets and moths. Although both groups have the same, broad focus, conversations and planned activities in the two rooms may differ greatly. Some activities in the topic packet may be skipped, and different high-value activities may be offered to support children's interests.

Educators are expected to “re-run” books and activities that especially interest children. That means that the same activity will be shared again over the course of several days or weeks. Through repeated opportunities to explore, children gain expertise, test new ideas, and work in increasingly complex ways. Repetition helps children build confidence and construct knowledge.

Investigations are not limited to one week. In fact, groups may focus on the same topic for two, three, or four weeks – or more! It is believed that deep, comprehensive investigation of any interesting topic is more beneficial to young thinkers and learners than a “sprinkling” of many different topics. Thus, children and adults are invited to continue their investigation as long as it sustains children's interest. An investigation concludes when educators observe that children's questions have been answered. Children seem satisfied and ready to move on to other topics of interest.

EPC Daily Practices

A resource packet is available to support each investigation topic. These packets support learning throughout the day in these eight ways:

1. Learning Center Extensions

Free play is a crucial part of every day! Learning Center Extensions are play objects and other materials that support the topic. These can be added to the indoor play areas that children use every day. The items in this section are examples. Educators may implement their own ideas, as well.

2. Books for Sharing with Groups

Suggestions for books are listed in each packet. It is not expected that programs will purchase the entire book list. Rather, the list may provide guidance and inspiration as educators select books from their storage area and/or their local children's library.

These may be added to classroom book areas and can be shared informally with one or a few children at a time during play times. Some of the books on the list are also designated as *** recommended read-alouds** for sharing with larger groups of children.

3. Topical Conversations

Conversations can occur within the context of play or daily routines. Especially with older preschoolers, some conversations may also occur during whole group meeting times. In addition to informal conversations throughout the day, *Explorers* encourages educators to routinely use two additional strategies each week:

Response Charts

The educator talks individually with each child and writes down exactly what they say. This interview process takes place during play time or other informal times. Once all of the children have had a chance to respond, the chart is posted where everyone can easily see it. The educator reads all of the responses aloud during a group meeting. Written response charts are recommended at least once a week.

Polls

Children and adults respond to a question by writing their name under one of two choices on a chart. Younger or less experienced groups may opt to place name cards on the chart instead. The polling process takes place with one, or a few, children at a time – perhaps as part of the morning arrival routine or as children finish breakfast.

During a group meeting, children and adults look together at the chart. It is recommended that children are invited to complete polls 1-3 times per week.

4. Playful Songs, Rhymes, and Games

These simple activities may be incorporated into group gathering times or used as transition activities. Many are “piggyback songs” – meaning that they offer new words to tunes that children may already know.

5. Active, Physical Play

Most of these activities are intended for the outdoor play area. Some are also suited for indoor gross motor spaces – such as gyms – or active group gatherings.

Educators are encouraged to invite children to join in activities such as these daily. Many children will want to participate, while others would rather continue with their own, free choice gross motor play. When two or more adults are present, one can lead the activity while others supervise children elsewhere in the play area.

6. Growing Every Day

These vignettes highlight strong, positive guidance practices. Educators are reminded that the most valuable learning occurs when adults model, coach, guide, and encourage children in the context of everyday interactions.

7. Small Group Learning Experiences

Ideas for small group learning experiences make up the bulk of each resource packet. These learning experiences are intended to be carried out with groups of 3 – 5 children at a time.

This means that educators will complete each activity with several small groups. For some activities, some children may participate in the morning and some may participate in the afternoon. A few activities may even take place over the course of several days. Using lists or sign-up sheets can reassure children that everyone will have a turn.

You'll find a key to small group learning experiences on the following page.

8. Concluding Your Exploration

This final section of each resource packet invites educators to reflect about whether children are ready to wrap up and move on to another topic of investigation. It includes ideas for culminating events and documentation.

Key to Small Group Learning Experiences

Each double-sided small group learning experiences idea sheet has specific components to assist you with planning and facilitation:

<p>Exploring with Flashlights Let's investigate flashlights and go on a low light adventure!</p> <p>Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Basket of assorted flashlights (at least one or two more flashlights than children in the small group) <p>Talk with children about what they know about flashlights. Flashlights are lights that we can carry in our hand. They are usually powered by batteries, and they are tools that let us see in dark places. What experiences have children had with flashlights? They might talk about using flashlights when camping or when the lights go out during a thunderstorm.</p> <p>Invite children to investigate the flashlights in the basket. Notice together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How flashlights switch on and off.• Which ones are brightest, and which are dim.• Which ones have a narrow beam, and which ones have a wide beam.• Other differences and similarities related to size, shape, color, and function. <p>This may be a good time to support children as they learn to ask for turns and trade materials – "May I use the tiny flashlight next?", and, "I'll trade you the blue flashlight for the green one."</p> <p>After a period of open-ended exploration, invite each child to choose a flashlight to take on a walk. You'll go together to another area where the lights are dim, but not totally dark. This could be another room, a hallway, a gymnasium, or any other child-safe space where you can turn out the lights. Invite children to investigate by walking around and shining their lights on things that interest them.</p> <p>When you return to the classroom, talk with children about what they noticed while exploring with flashlights.</p> <p>Helpful Hints Ask colleagues for help building a collection of flashlights. Families may be happy to help, too.</p>	<p>Title</p> <p>Materials: Things to gather and prepare</p> <p>Procedure: How to facilitate the activity with children</p> <p>Helpful Hints: Tips for a smooth, successful experience.</p>
<p>front of page</p> <p>Including Every Explorer: Ways to individualize and adapt for children with special needs.</p> <p>More to Do: Suggestions for extending learning, creating displays, and engaging families.</p> <p>Did You Know?: Fun facts and/or background information for teachers.</p> <p>Build and Strengthen: Connection to AR Early Learning Standards (CDELS)</p>	<p>back of page</p> <p>Exploring with Flashlights, cont.</p> <p>Including Every Explorer Some children are frightened by dark places. If a child seems worried, invite them to hold your hand or walk next to you.</p> <p>Some children may require one-on-one support to have a safe, satisfying experience outside their familiar classroom. If this is not possible, find a way to explore inside the classroom.</p> <p>More to Do (optional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hang pictures of nighttime (nocturnal) creatures in the place where children will explore. Have fun spotting owls, bats, opossums, and more!• Create a flashlight exploration space in your classroom with the basket of flashlights and a large, open appliance box that children can crawl inside.• To challenge older or more experienced preschoolers, place one flashlight without batteries in the basket with the working flashlights. When children discover the non-working light, encourage them to investigate. Offer two different sizes of batteries when they realize that batteries are needed. They'll figure out which size is correct and install them in the flashlight. "I fixed it!" <p>Did You Know? This exploration may seem simple to adults, but we have far more experience with flashlights and dim places than children do! Children may investigate many different things, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How a flashlight beam moves when they move their arm.• What happens when light shines on a window or mirror.• How a beam of light changes as it moves closer to a surface that it is shining on. <p>This experience offers special opportunities to build and strengthen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social and Emotional Development – SE 1.2, SE 2.1, SE 2.2• Cognitive Development – CD 1.1, CD 2.1• Science and Technology – ST 1.1, ST 3.2