

# INV. 1–2 ACTIVITY—LONG-TERM TREE OBSERVATIONS (PAGE 1 OF 2)

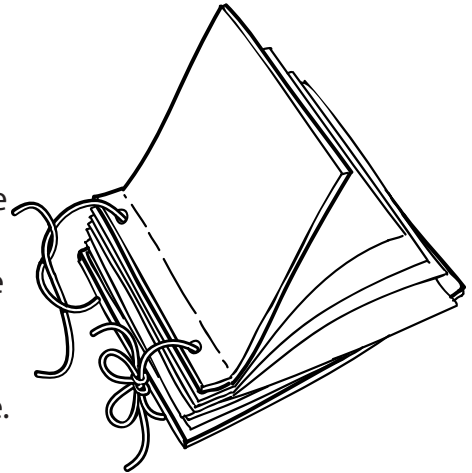
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## Introduction

If your child was learning in school they might have begun this module observing schoolyard trees. They would have learned about the parts of a tree—the roots, the trunk, the branches, the leaves, flowers, and possibly even seen the fruits of trees (depending on the season). They would have “adopted” a schoolyard tree to observe and care for. The best way for students to learn about and to gain an appreciation for trees is by touching them, observing them, and wondering about them.

## Long-term Exploration of Two Trees

Over the next month you will go outside to “adopt” two trees near your home and observe them over time. You will visit both trees at least once a week. Each outdoor visit will have a different focus and there will be different questions to ask. We recommend that you make a notebook or simple scrapbook of some sort to keep track of your observations, you could use a file folder with some blank pages inserted, or construction paper for the front and back with some blank pages inside. Punch holes and tie the book together or just staple one edge. You can collect leaves and other artifacts from the tree to include in your scrapbook.



Before you go out, ask your child if they have seen any trees? If so, where are they? On page one of your scrapbook, draw a picture of a tree. Explain to your child that trees are the biggest plants in the world. Label this picture “tree.”

**First outing:** Go outside and look at the trees near your home. How many do you see? Can you count them? Are the trees all the same? Talk to your child about which trees seem interesting to them. Explain that you will be learning about trees and really get to know two of them by visiting them at least once a week.

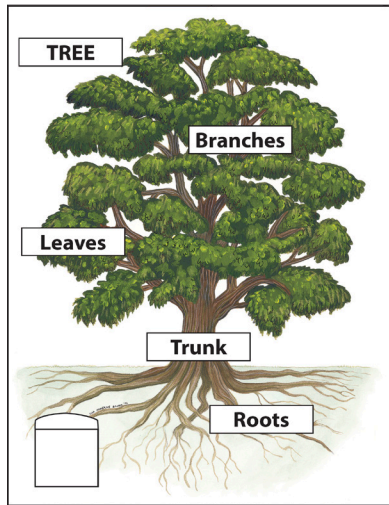
Select two trees that are relatively close together, perhaps ones you could sit near. Once you have selected the two trees, have your child draw each of them, each on a separate sheet of paper. If you know the name of the trees you can name them, if you do not, you can make up a name, “Giant tree with heart-shaped leaves” or whatever suits you.

Ask your child what they notice about the trees? How are they alike? How are they different? What colors do they see? How do the trees smell? Do you think the trees are living things? Are the trees old or young?

Add the tree drawings to the scrap book. Write some of your child’s observations as well. Ask your child what questions they have about trees. Record some of their questions.

*(Continued on the next page)*

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**Second outing:** Revisit your outdoor trees. Start by sitting quietly near the trees and observing. Look up through the leaves or branches, is the sunlight shining through? Any changes since last week? Any new observations? This time—touch the parts of the tree as you name them with your child. Can you see the roots? What do the trunks look like? Can you see the leaves? Can you reach the branches? Look at these structures on both trees.

Then consider, when you step back and look at the tree, what is the overall shape of it? When you are back inside, label your first drawings of your trees. Label the: roots, trunk, leaves, and branches. Do this for both trees. Does your child want to add any parts to the drawings?

**Third outing:** This time you will study the leaves from the two trees. Take a few samples from each tree. What are the shapes of the leaves? What are the colors? What do you notice about the leaves when you look really close? Are both sides of each leaf the same? How are the leaves from the two different trees alike? How are they different?

Collect one sample of a leaf from each tree to add to your scrap book. Later, you can help your child write in the scrap book (or you can write for them): “The leaf is \_\_\_\_\_.”

You might also want to make a leaf rubbings, by placing the leaf, bumpy side up on a table, and then rubbing the long side of a stripped crayon over the leaf.

Before heading inside, consider if there are other parts of the tree that you could collect or photograph: flowers, seeds, bark, twigs, cones, etc.

**Fourth outing:** For this visit to the tree, bring a crayon. Observe the bark on the tree trunk. What color is it? What is the texture? Is anything living on the bark? Is the bark on the branches the same as the bark on the trunk? Do a bark rubbing with the crayon, the same way you did the leaves. Put the paper on the bark and rub the flat/long side of crayon over the bark.

After observing the bark, take some time to sit and look at the tree. Are any animals living in or on the tree? Do animals visit it?

Take some time to think about how the animals on or near the tree might be changing the surroundings, such as a squirrel burying a seed or a woodpecker drilling a hole in the tree. Also, consider if there is any evidence about how your trees might be changing their surroundings. Perhaps by providing shade to the plants living below or by the roots breaking up through concrete at the base of the tree. Record any of these changes in your notebook.