

# Exploring the Outdoors

Hello!

We're happy to welcome you to **Five Rivers Environmental Education Center** for an exciting, hands-on exploration of nature. Please let us know if there's anything we can do to make your visit go more smoothly.

Do any of your students have **special needs**? We can accommodate a wide range of physical challenges or learning disabilities. Please let us know in advance!

Objective of this Lesson: To encourage students to feel comfortable and safe in the outdoors, and to demonstrate how they can explore nature using their senses.

In this Lesson:

- Students will become more aware of plants, animals and the physical environment.
- Students will investigate by touching, smelling, seeing and hearing.
- Students will observe how plants and animals change their behavior or growth as the seasons change.

Preparations:

- DRESS for the outdoors! Students will be outside for the entire lesson. Check the back of this sheet for clothing tips.

- There must be at least one adult CHAPERONE per group. All Chaperones must assist the instructor and participate in the class.

-Please bring a SNACK for each child, to be eaten immediately before or during the class. This is especially important if the students' normal lunchtime will be delayed!



We look forward to your visit, and to sharing a unique environmental experience with your students.

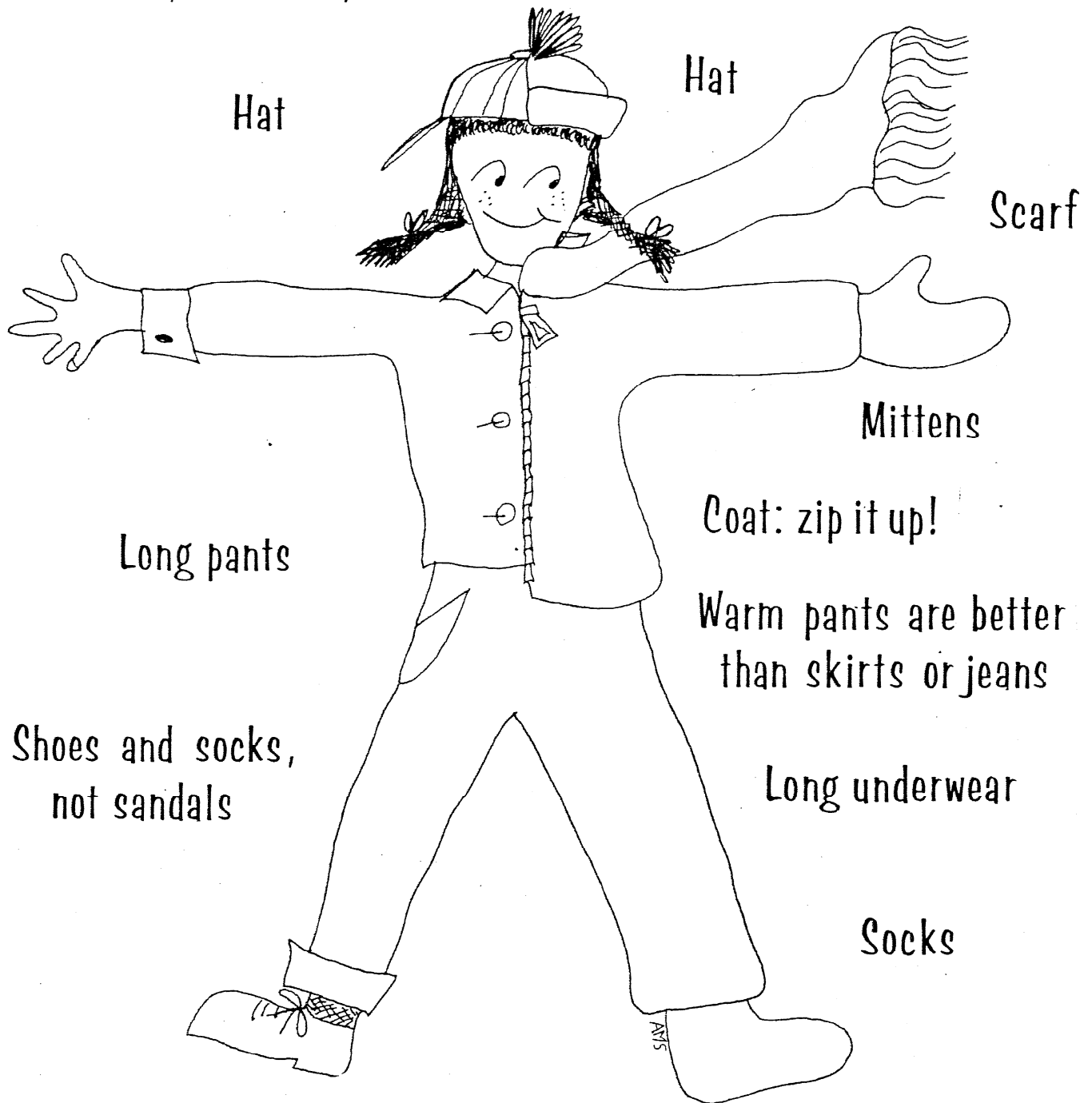
***See you at Five Rivers!***

DRESS LIKE ME IN:



SPRING, SUMMER, FALL

WINTER



Hat

Hat

Scarf

Mittens

Long pants

Coat: zip it up!

Warm pants are better than skirts or jeans

Shoes and socks, not sandals

Long underwear

Socks

Old sneakers or boots for aquatic lessons

Boots: at least ankle-high

## Parents' Page

Your child will soon be visiting *Five Rivers Environmental Education Center* to learn about the natural environment. We're delighted to welcome you and share these ideas for an enjoyable visit.

### Dress for Success!

- Trails may be wet or muddy, so students should wear **appropriate footwear**.
- **Long pants** are recommended.
- Bring **rain gear** if there may be rain: the lesson is geared for the out-of-doors!
- Bring a **hat** and a **water bottle**.
- In cold weather, **hats, mittens** and **coats** are a must. If it's hot, short sleeves!

### Chaperones: You are an important part of this program!

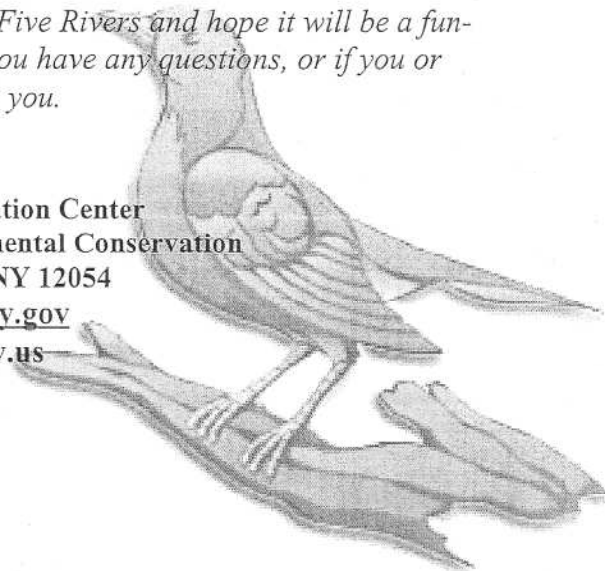
- Encourage students to **participate** in class activities and be part of them yourself.
- Your help with **discipline and safety** is vital for a successful class.
- Remain **attentive** to the lesson and please save conversations for outside the class.
- **Do not use cell phones** except in an emergency.
- Above all, **enjoy** this experience along with the students!

**Insect Repellent:** Many contain powerful chemicals, and we do not recommend them. If you choose to use repellent:

- We suggest that you **wait to apply** repellent until it is needed.
- Please use it carefully and **read** all instructions.
- Insect repellent should **never be applied to hands or face**, and should be **washed off** before eating. Look for less toxic or organic repellent alternatives.
- Students with repellent on should **not touch amphibians**, who can be harmed by it.

*We look forward to seeing you and/or your child at Five Rivers and hope it will be a fun-filled and exciting experience. Please contact the Center if you have any questions, or if you or your child have special needs; we will be happy to talk with you.*

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# Outdoor Explorations

Your forthcoming visit to Five Rivers Center will be much more enjoyable for you and your students if you do some **PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES** with them. Since one of the goals of the lesson is **SENSORY AWARENESS**, we suggest some of the following:

## SIGHT

- ◆ Ask the students to draw a tree, then go outside and **observe a real tree**. Ask students to notice and touch its leaves, bark, and twigs. Listen for the sound of the wind in the branches and sniff the leaves or needles. Then ask the students to draw a tree again, putting in as many details as they can recall.
- ◆ Have students close their eyes and recall details of classroom decorations, classmates' clothing, or the weather outside.

## SOUND

- ◆ Use recordings of familiar sounds and let the students **guess what the sounds** are.
- ◆ Have the students close their eyes and listen for unnoticed sounds in the room, or open the classroom door or window and listen to sounds outside.
- ◆ Have one student move quietly around the room, and have the other children close their eyes and listen, trying to guess where the student is.

## TOUCH

- ◆ Have the students do **texture rubbings**, using paper and crayon.
- ◆ How many different words can the students think of to name the way something feels?

## SMELL

- ◆ Prepare a number of "**sniff bags**" by placing aromatic substances (pine needles, grass, dried leaves, orange peel, cinnamon) in small paper bags. Have the students guess what's inside.
- ◆ At lunch or snack time, ask the students to be award of different aromas and ask them if they can name any of them.

## TASTE

- ◆ Taste is not a sense we stress at Five Rivers, but it can be exercised in a classroom setting. Prepare small quantities of familiar food items (apple, pickle, berry, etc.) and let blindfolded students guess the identity of the item by tasting.

Any other activity that would make the students **aware of their five senses** would be appropriate and very helpful to prepare the students for their visit.

*Activity for defining a habitat*

## Everybody Needs a Home



**Method:**

Students create a floor plan of their house and compare their needs with those of other animals.

**Materials:**

Art supplies as needed.

**Procedure:**

1. Ask the students to close their eyes and imagine different homes: their own homes; a bird's home; an ant's home; a beaver's home; the President's home; their grandparents' homes.

2. Ask the students to draw a picture of where they live, including the things they need to survive; for example, a place to keep **food**, a place to sleep and get **shelter** from the weather, and a place to get **water**.

3. Ask the students how their homes are similar to and different from animals' homes. Look for pictures of different homes that animals create. Ideas might include a beaver lodge; an ant's nest; a beehive; a woodchuck or chipmunk den, different types of birds' nests.

4. Discuss the differences and similarities among the different animal homes. Have the students identify the components every animal needs in its home - food, water, shelter, and space in which to live. Summarize the discussion by emphasizing that although the homes are different, every animal needs a home.

Talk about the idea that a home is actually bigger than a "house." An owl may sleep in a hole in a tree, but it needs a whole forest to catch mice in. An animal's home is more like a neighborhood.

An animal's neighborhood, where all its survival needs are met, is called a **habitat**.

5. Draw or create dioramas or replicas of animal homes and habitats.

# Rubbings



Lay this paper on top of a natural object (leaf, bark, feather) and rub the paper with the side of a dark crayon

1

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