

# Connecting Kids to Nature

Nature is a great teacher and getting kids outside to learn and play is good for their brains and their bodies. Try this outdoor activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's safe, fun, and educational!



## The Fallen Log

It's amazing how many things live in and on rotting logs. In this activity, kids become familiar with some of those organisms by observing fallen logs. They'll gain an understanding of how *decomposition* takes place and a better appreciation for *microhabitats* and *communities*.

Take your grandchild, neighbor's child, or others for a walk in the woods. Look for a fallen log or rotting tree stump. Conduct a thought exercise by asking, "What happens to a tree after it dies?" Investigate the answer by using powers of observation:

- How did the tree die and how long has it been dead?
- Are there signs of animals, including insects, in, on, or around the log? How about plants?
- How are they interconnected?
- Where do these living things get the nutrients they need to survive?

Be careful not to disturb the *habitat* as you observe. You could use a digital camera—or sketchbook—to record pictures of anything you see. Use field guides or the internet to identify and research them later. Finally, brainstorm ways in which the forest ecosystem benefits from the fallen log you examined.

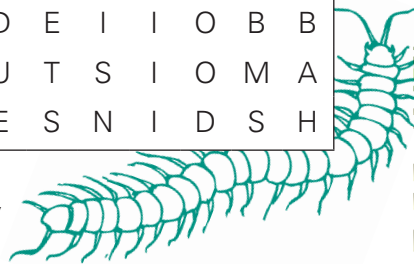
For a children's story book that illustrates many creatures a child could find under a fallen log, see *What's Under the Log?* by Anne Hunter, published by Houghton Mifflin, 1999, ISBN: 0395754968.



Do this word search puzzle to discover some important components in this microhabitat. Look below for the answers.

D	E	C	O	M	P	O	S	I	T	I	O	N	B
S	T	N	E	I	R	T	U	N	N	M	Z	E	T
X	G	E	A	I	R	E	T	C	A	B	E	E	A
F	U	N	G	I	D	B	E	P	Q	T	R	K	T
S	P	I	D	E	R	S	J	H	L	M	W	Y	I
M	I	L	L	I	P	E	D	E	I	I	O	B	B
E	L	C	Y	C	E	R	U	T	S	I	O	M	A
Y	F	M	S	K	T	C	E	S	N	I	D	S	H

Answers: Decomposition, Spiders, Millipede, Bee, Fungi, Wood, Beetle, Air, Map, Pet, Habitat, Ant, Recycle, Wite, Soil, Dirt, Moist, Flip, Insect.



Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is an initiative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

### Make Learning Fun!

Encourage your child's school to incorporate learning outdoors.

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop, [www.plt.org/state-network/](http://www.plt.org/state-network/)
- Visit [shop.plt.org](http://shop.plt.org)

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