

Connecting Kids to Nature

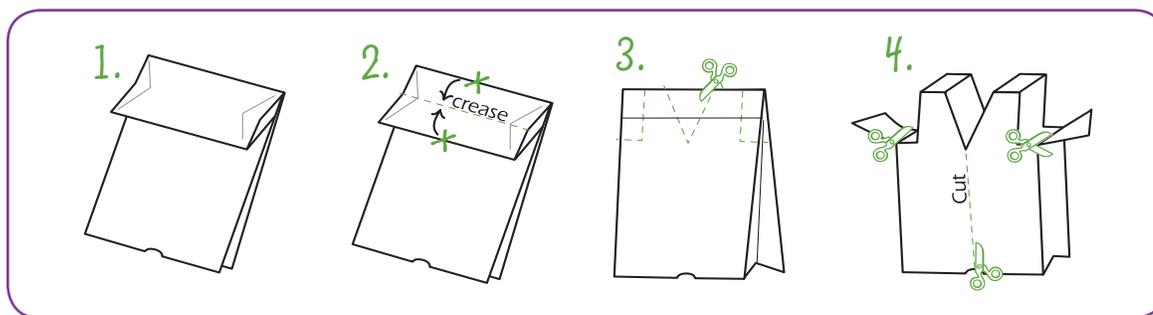
Nature is a great teacher and getting kids outside to learn and play is good for their brains and their bodies. Try this outdoor activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's safe, fun, and educational!

To Be a Tree

By making a tree costume, children will gain awareness of tree structure and functions.

On your next walk, select a tree and ask children to name and identify its component parts (trunk, branch, leaves, bark, roots, etc.). Collect a few leaves and after heading back inside, invite children to make leaf rubbings by placing leaves (vein side up) on white paper and rubbing over them with the sides of paperless crayons. Carefully cut out the leaf rubbings, punch a hole in each, and use yarn to string them together into a crown.

Next, use the pattern below to help children create a paper bag vest. This vest can be worn with the leaf crown above to make a tree costume that models real tree parts.



With a child's torso serving as a tree's trunk and their arms as branches, ask children to add these tree parts to their vests:

- **Bark** - glue pieces of bark directly to OR try a bark rubbing on the outside of vest
- **Roots** - tape long strands of yarn to the bottom of the vest
- **Phloem** - glue stirring straws (smaller diameter) to the inside of vest
- **Cambium** - attach tissue paper to the inside of vest
- **Xylem** - tape drinking straws (larger diameter) to the inside of vest
- **Heartwood** - create a paper chain to wear as a belt

Make Learning Fun!

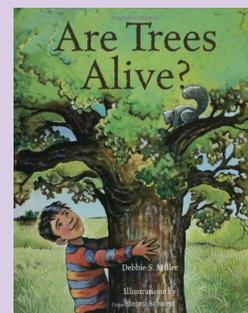
Encourage your child's school to incorporate learning outdoors.

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop, www.plt.org/state-network/
- Visit shop.plt.org

Are Trees Alive?

Ask older children to research phloem, cambium, xylem, and heartwood to better understand the material metaphors used on their tree vests. Skip this higher level vocabulary with younger children and instead read *Are Trees Alive?* by Debbie Miller (2002), which talks about the ways in which trees and people are alike (ISBN: 0802788017).



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

www.plt.org