

# 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!

## Trees in Trouble

Become “tree-tectives” (tree detectives) by first examining neighborhood trees for signs of poor health and then investigating actions to help trees in trouble.

When a person is ill, we look for symptoms to help identify what is wrong. Help children brainstorm causes, symptoms, and cures for their past ailments, or perhaps those of a family member. Together, explore:

- What caused the illness and what were its symptoms?
- How did the person get better? What was the cure?
- Could this illness be prevented in the future? If so, how?

Now, work with children to compare elements that keep humans healthy with those that keep trees healthy. For example, trees require some of the same things people need to grow and thrive. They need plenty of water, nutrients, room to grow, and a stress-free environment. When a tree is stressed, it exhibits symptoms that can help determine the problem.

### Protecting Trees and Forests

- Investigate the similarities and differences between an unhealthy tree and healthy trees nearby
- Adopt an unhealthy tree as a community project
- Revisit an unhealthy tree over time to document any change or decay
- Invite a tree expert from a garden center or forestry department to help

Plan a walk down a tree-lined city sidewalk, in a park, or in the woods, paying particular attention to trees and their symptoms along the way. Children can use the images on this page to identify some signs of unhealthy trees. They should take notes and make sketches of their findings to try and identify what caused the damage.

### 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)

### Tree-tective Trouble Guide



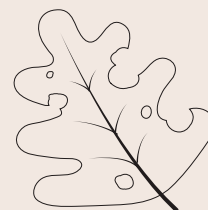
Broken branches attached



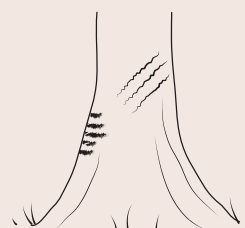
Broken branches on ground



Problems with staking  
Stakes bent, wires loose,  
tree not secured



Insect feeding  
Many leaves missing or  
full of holes



Trunk damaged  
Hit by car or lawn mower



Dead tree



Rotten spots



Split trunk



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

[www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org)