

Take a Field Trip

Remember how much fun field trips were? Your preschooler will find them just as much fun. As you know, a field trip is an excursion for the purpose of firsthand observation and to gain information, knowledge, or experience. Field trips do not have to be expensive. You can take advantage of places right where you live.

Considerations for Taking a Field Trip With a Preschooler

- Limit the time you spend on the field trip. Remember that a preschooler's attention span may mean that you have "short" field trips. Stay only as long as your child stays interested.
- Field trips take energy. Go when both you and your child are rested.
- Take along a bottle of water and an easy to carry snack.
- Separate your "business" from the field trip. For example, grocery shopping in combination with a field trip to your local market is not a field trip.
- Think about your community. You probably have many options for field trips. Plan field trips that help your preschooler explore his local community.
- Be a "tour guide" on the field trip. Call attention to points of interest. Ask questions to stimulate conversation.
- Before you head out on your field trip, talk with your child about what you will see and do. Name the

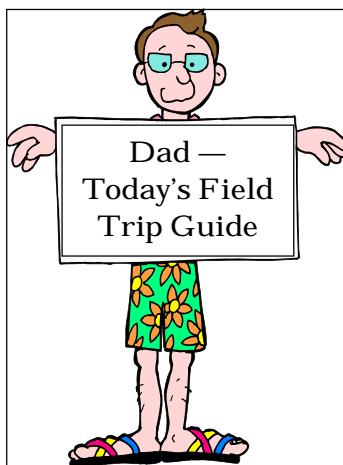
things and people you will look for, such as flowers, animals, fire fighters, or bus riders in the place you are visiting.

- Talk with your preschooler about safety rules so that the trip will be pleasant and safe, such as, "I want you to hold my hand."

Following are some ideas for a field trip. Use this as a starter to get you thinking about the many field trip possibilities where you live.

Visit a farmer's market. Take your preschooler to the farmer's market to see all the fresh produce. Point out the piles of lettuce, baskets of berries, goat cheese, buffalo meat, and jars of honey. Compare the different types of tomatoes or squash. Try samples of food. Look at the different colors and smell the different odors. Look for unusual fruits or vegetables that are new to your family.

Look at cloud shapes. Outdoor activities are typically pretty active. Here is a quieter field trip. Select a partly cloudy, partly sunny day. Take along a rug or mat to put on the ground. Lie down on your backs and look at the interesting shapes the clouds form in the sky. If it is an especially good day for clouds, call attention to the different varieties of clouds. Note if the wind is blowing and its effect on the clouds. Ask your preschooler to see "things" such as animals or people in the clouds. Some children prefer just to enjoy watching the sky without wanting to describe what they see. Follow your child's lead. Call attention to other things in the sky such as planes, birds,



insects, moon, or blowing leaves. Enjoy the quiet time together.

Take a hike by a creek or stream. (Remember to supervise children closely around water.)

Gather together some tools (kitchen strainer, plastic or paper cups, plastic egg carton, dishpan or plastic pail) to help you find things in the water. Bring along a towel for drying wet hands and feet. Find a calm spot along a stream to do your exploring. If the bed of the stream is rocky, wear old sneakers that you don't mind getting wet. Using the strainer and cups, see what animals you can find in the water. If you are lucky, you may find water bugs, tadpoles, frogs, fish, or crayfish. Try lifting up the rocks to see what creatures live under them. Use your egg carton to take a closer look at your finds, but be sure to return them to their "homes."



Walk in the woods. Talk and walk your way through the woods. Children love to gather leaves, pine cones, flowers. Wrap duct tape sticky side out on your wrists. Decorate it with pieces of nature found on your walk. When you get home, cut off your "decorated" bracelets and display what you found at home. Try to identify the items you collected.

Surveying neighborhood signs. Even a child who cannot read can notice signs and symbols. You might want to make a chart on a piece of cardboard with signs and symbols on it. You could use stop signs, traffic lights, yield signs, railroad crossings, curve signs, or anything that you often see where you live. Have your child match the ones you draw to those around your neighborhood. As you search out the signs and symbols in your community, talk about what they stand for and explain ones your

child does not know. Put new signs onto the cardboard as you and your preschooler discover them. This is a pre-reading activity to help prepare your child to read words.



Listen for sounds outside. Our world is filled with many sounds. On this field trip you and your child will attend to all the sounds you hear. Ask your child where the sound is coming from. See if your child can name the sound. Talk about how inside sounds and outside sounds are different. You might even take along a tape recorder to "catch" sounds you hear. Have your preschooler add sounds to the taping. When you get home, you and your child can enjoy hearing all the sounds, including your preschooler's voice.

Things You Can Do After the Trip

- Talk with your children about what you saw, heard, touched, or smelled.
- Make a booklet about the trip with your children. Have them tell you a story about the trip as you write it down.
- If you take pictures during the trip, put them in a booklet you make or in a photo album.

Source:

James E. Van Horn, Ellen Y. Matten, and Natalie Ferry. (2003). *Family Time: Strengthen Your Family, Ages 4-6*. Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension Service.

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