

Nature and Outdoor Breaks During Online Education

Online education is hard, for students, educators, and parents alike. For some, a little outdoor or nature "brain break" can go a long way in burning off energy, mentally focusing, and staying motivated. Here are some ways to incorporate outdoor time into online learning routines. Some will align with your classwork, some are simply strategies for successfully getting outside.



Nature Escapes

There's a reason schools provide recess: time outside is a proven way to improve mental, physical, and emotional health. Quiet, unstructured, or "non-academic" time to de-stress, rejuvenate, or heal might be the most vital reason for your student to spend time outside right now, especially if they will be doing a lot of school work on a screen. If possible, get outside before and during tough mental activities, not just as a reward after.

Daily Routines

Don't underestimate the value in walking, hiking, or biking frequently and routinely, and sometimes even following the same route. In addition to providing physical activity, routine outings help students notice and track seasonal changes (a great way to build observation skills and ask questions, and a springboard for independent research for older students). Plus, with so much "new" during this school year, the comfort of a familiar route or place might be welcome.

PE in Nature

PE doesn't have to mean team sports or physical contact. There are many ways to get students physically active outside in fun, engaging ways. Visit www.fitenvironment.com for resources, activities, and guides we created as part of the "Fit Environment" program designed to bring outdoor recreation into PE classes.

Nature "Projects"

Does your student do better with a reason to be outside? Nature projects or challenges might provide the structure, goal, or purpose they crave. Try some of the options listed below. Feel free to reach out to Lilly Jensen at education@winneshiekwild.com if you need guidance on any of these programs.

- *Nature Bingo Boards* (available at www.winneshiekwild.com/covid-ed) and other *Nature Scavenger Hunts* (many varieties available online).
- *Citizen Science* programs help track seasonal changes, wildlife, weather trends, and more.
- *Geocaching* apps are widely available and can take you to amazing *Earthcaches* that teach you about local natural resources and wonders.
- *Physical challenges* like hiking a tough hill, biking farther each day, or building a stick fort.

Visit www.winneshiekwild.com/covid-ed
for additional resources and ideas.

