



Tips for Taking Students Outside

Classroom Prep:

Successful and stress-free outdoor experiences begin in the classroom! It is very important to set the stage for what will follow outside. Establish expectations and make sure that students have the tools they need to carry out the work.

1. Set the Stage:

- Tell students the day before they will be going outside the next day. Students need to dress properly for the weather and site conditions.
- Review rules for outside behavior and the consequences for breaking the rules.
- Package all equipment so that it can be easily carried and used. White compound buckets are great! These can be used to transport materials and make great seats! Include material lists to keep equipment organized.
- Use large dry erase boards to write objectives, directions, and to record group data.
- Laminate student handouts or place them in zip-loc bags.
- Invest in student clipboards. 12" x 14" masonite boards and binder clips are a cheap and durable alternative. You can get the boards cut to size at a local home supply store.

2. Plan Well:

- Keep outdoor activities simple and focused. Set clear goals for what will be accomplished while outside.
- Plan an activity that requires the student to produce a product. This will help students stay focused and will allow you to assess the success of your day.
- When planning, be sure you allow the group enough time to get back to the classroom and pack up for the next period.

3. Know Your Field Work Site!

- Know where you are going for the activity and set the boundaries in advance.
- Be familiar with the location for the activity—scout it in advance so that there are no surprises.

On the Day of the Activity

- Explain the activity and discuss it with students. Establish clear objectives for the investigations and tell the students exactly what they must accomplish while outside—what they need to turn in at the end of the activity. The more explaining inside, the less will be necessary outside. It is much easier to get everyone's attention while inside. As a general rule, create a scenario where it isn't necessary to give directions outdoors.
- Allow students to help determine the rules, keeping them few and simple. Quickly review their rules again immediately before actually going outside.
- Decide (with the students) the signal to use for everyone to stop talking and pay attention. A referee's whistle can be a lifesaver!