



NATURE-ORIENTED PARENTING®



A guide for caregivers to teach children about the natural world

A companion to the *Natural Inquirer*

...Be natural

Celebrate the Wild!

Before European colonization and westward expansion, the lands and waters of what is now the United States were mostly wild. Wild areas are lands and waters in their natural condition with little to no influence from humans. Nature is the dominant influence in wild areas. In 1964, with an almost unanimous vote, Congress passed a law that established a system of wild areas referred to as the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). From just 9.2 million acres established as wilderness by Congress in 1964, the amount of area in the NWPS has grown to nearly 110 million acres today.

Areas within the NWPS are the most protected of any land and water areas in the United States. They are referred to as wilderness areas. Motorized vehicles, mechanical transportation, mining, timber harvesting, farming, and other such uses are not permitted in NWPS areas. Some people question whether U.S. citizens are in support of having highly protected wilderness areas. This question has actually been studied. One study shows that citizens support the idea of having highly protected wilderness lands, and more than one-half of them think even more areas should be added for permanent protection. The U.S. public especially values wilderness areas, because they help provide clean water, good wildlife habitat, clean air, and protection for endangered plant or animal species. The sample of the public in this study also placed value on protecting wilderness so that their children and future generations will have wild, natural areas to visit and appreciate. Overall, the U.S. public places a higher value on preservation of the natural condition of wilderness than on using these natural areas as sources of minerals, timber, growing crops, or land development.



Izembek Wilderness. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Maroon Bells Snowmass Wilderness. Photo by Babs McDonald.

The year 2014 marks the 50th anniversary of passage of the law that established the NWPS. A national conference celebrates this 50th landmark in 2014 in Albuquerque, NM. For more information about this celebration, visit <http://www.wilderness50th.org>.

Ken Cordell, Scientist Emeritus, USDA Forest Service

The 10 Hiking Essentials

Map • Knife • Compass (optionally supplemented with a GPS receiver) • Extra food
Sunglasses and sunscreen • Extra water • Extra clothes • Headlamp/flashlight
First aid kit • Fire starter (matches, chemical heat tabs, canned heat, or a magnesium stick)

The *Nature-Oriented Parenting* newsletter is designed for you to cut it out of the journal and take it home to share with your parents or other caregivers.



Family Hiking Activity

Hiking with kids is a great way to connect them with the outdoors at a young age, but it can also be intimidating for the parent planner. We challenge you to get the kids in your life out on the trail this year, because part of preserving wilderness for future generations is teaching youth to appreciate and enjoy nature. Here are 10 tips to help get the kids outdoors:

Keep it easy and feature friendly. For at least the first few times, select a hike that isn't too long or too strenuous—remember that for kids, the hike is about the experience. Picking a trail that has some features—a lake, stream, waterfall, or something else—will keep kids occupied and give them a goal to reach. And remember, it's about the journey, not the destination. If your child is more interested in getting down on his or her hands and knees to explore the undergrowth, then that is the experience for the day—there will always be a next time.

Time is your friend—so plan for lots of it. Kids are natural explorers and want to pick up and touch everything. This is one of the greatest things about hiking—there's so much of the natural world for kids to discover and examine—make sure they have time to get their wilderness fill.

Prepare for anything. This pretty much goes for any hike, regardless of whether or not a child is involved. Always make sure you pack the 10 Essentials (see the sidebar). Additional kid-friendly supplies are wet wipes or tissues, lip balm, binoculars, a magnifying glass, field guides (to point things out to kids), a camera, and a safety whistle for each child. Teach children why, how, and when to use the 10 Essentials.

Dress for success. Layers, layers, layers. Make sure to take ample amounts of clothing in case your child gets chilled while out on the trail. Always bring rain clothes—aside from the wet weather, they can also be great windbreaking clothing. Don't forget hats and gloves for everyone—even in the summer, mornings can be chilly. Make sure your kids have adequate hiking shoes, depending on terrain, this could range from sandals to tot-sized hiking boots. Finally, always pack a change of clothes for each child and leave them in the car for your return from the trail—chances are your children will be wet or muddy!

Plan frequent energy stops. Hiking requires a lot of energy. Energy-sapped kids often equate to cranky kids. Keep your child happy and motivated by taking numerous small breaks for fluid and food. You can also use energy breaks as a way to keep your child moving by saying, "at that footbridge, we'll take a break and have a snack." Chances are, by the time they have had that snack, they will be eager to continue. Also take a medley of snacks in case your child becomes a picky eater out on the trail.

Pick a leader and be sure to rotate. Kids love feeling like they are in charge. Having the children take turns leading the hiking group can help the kids feel empowered—just make sure that the leadership rotates or this could lead to arguments farther down the trail. By allowing the kids to lead, you can also make sure that the pace is slow enough so they can keep up.

Make it fun! The key to a successful hike is to keep the kids motivated and having fun—so why not combine the two? Create games that you and your children can play out on the trail. Have them look for signs of wildlife (scat, bird holes in trees, fur) or count wildflower species. Organize a scavenger hunt and have them find things that are bumpy, smelly, small, big, living, wet... the list goes on!

Believe in the power of positive reinforcement. When hiking, go overboard in telling your child how well they are hiking, how strong they look and how fast they are—even if they aren't. Kids need to hear that they are doing an awesome job, especially if it's their first time out on the trail (I'd say adults need this just as much, really!).

Leave no trace. When out on a hike, make sure that all of your trash is collected—taking a gallon-size, zip-top plastic bag always works well for this—the "pack it in, pack it out" concept is fully embraced on our trails. To further reinforce this idea, you could also take a small garbage bag and have the kids pick up any litter they see on the way back to the car. While taking a break, be sure to examine the area and see that everything is in its place. If your child dug a hole with a stick, cover it up again before you leave. For more information on Leave No Trace, visit <http://www.lnt.org>.

Hike often! Start a family tradition of going hiking one or more times a month. Kids love the sense of adventure and doing something new. There's a wide range of trails, terrain and sights for children to behold. With some kids spending a good chunk of their time indoors during the week, hiking on the weekend is a perfect way to get them outside—be it an urban park or wilderness area trail.

From <http://wilderness.org/blog/take-your-kids-hiking-10-tips-make-adventure-fun-whole-family>

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