

Connecting Kids to Nature

Try this activity in a forest—a natural place to learn!

For over 30 years, Project Learning Tree® has used the forest as a “window” to help young people gain an awareness of the world around them and their place within it. Blending a walk in the forest with a fun and engaging PLT activity creates a powerful learning experience for children of all ages. Here’s one idea in a series from PLT that introduces the concept of forest cycles.

Activity 21: Adopt a Tree

In this activity, children “adopt” a tree, deepening their awareness of individual trees over time and encouraging a greater understanding and appreciation of their local environment.

Doing the Activity

The next time you are on a walk in a familiar area, invite children to choose a particular tree to observe. Suggest they become better acquainted with it by using their senses of sight, touch, hearing, and smell to describe the tree. Encourage critical thinking by asking:

- Is this tree alive? How do you know?
- How is this tree similar to and/or different from other trees around it?
- How does this tree help the environment around it?

Complete the Adopt a Tree Journal Entry below. Revisit this tree on a regular basis throughout the year and in a variety of weather conditions. Have children guess reasons for the changes they see and then predict changes for the future.

Adopt a Tree Journal Entry

Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Describe the tree _____

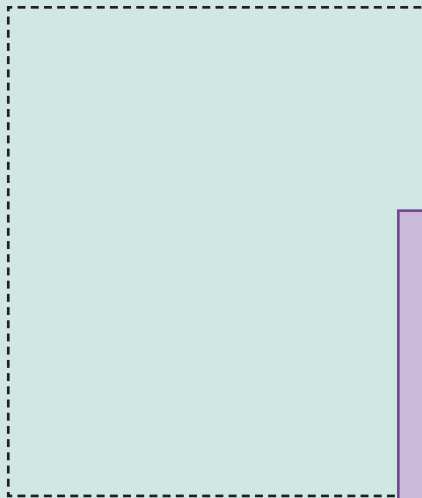
What color is the bark? _____

Why did you choose this tree? _____

What type of tree is it? _____

In the box, draw a picture of your tree or use a crayon or pencil to complete a leaf or bark rubbing.

My Adopted Tree



Adapted from Activity 21: Adopt a Tree from *Project Learning Tree's PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide*.

WEST VIRGINIA TREE FACT

As cooler temperatures arrive, hardwood trees drop their leaves—some 4,000 pounds per acre. Fallen leaves decay and provide nutrients for continued tree growth as well as homes for millions of tiny creatures.

HOW MANY SEASONAL SIGNS CAN YOU FIND?

Fall

- Leaf color change
- Intensity and range of leaf color
- Bird migration
- Evergreen cones

Winter

- Animal tracks
- Visible animal homes
- Snow accumulation
- Shorter days

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Discover how PLT can help you teach... from nature!

- Attend a workshop near you to receive PLT activity guides, ideas, and materials.
- Contact Cinda Francis, West Virginia PLT Coordinator at cfrancis@wvadventures.net or toll-free at (888) 372-9663.



Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is a program of the American Forest Foundation.