

GETTING A HEAD START ON THE OREGON TRAIL ACTIVITY BOOK

Draw Yourself!

Join the Fun!



Best for ages 3-8



“Our mission is to provide early childhood development services that prepare children for lifelong success”

Every Year:

- 600+ children are served by Head Start programs.
- 1,000 licensed child care facilities are offered resources and support.
- 3,000 caregivers receive training to help provide high-quality early child care.

About This Activity Book

This activity book is part of the project **Getting a Head Start on the Oregon Trail**, a creative project of Child Start, Inc. of Wichita, KS. This project includes this activity book and a storybook of the same name, featuring the same original characters. Both the storybook and activity book are free for non-commercial use by individuals or organizations. The characters remain the intellectual property of Child Start, Inc. and may not be used outside of this project without written permission from Child Start, Inc.

Child Start, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization which provides early childhood development services that prepare children for lifelong success. Child Start serves south-central Kansas as a grantee of the Head Start program for Butler, Harper, and Sedgwick Counties, and as an affiliate of Child Care Aware of Kansas for Butler, Cowley, Harvard, Sedgwick, and Sumner Counties. Every year Child Start serves more than 600 children from birth to age five through its Head Start program, and provides resources, training and support to more than 1,000 child care facilities and 3,000 caregivers.

The Getting a Head Start on the Oregon Trail project was first proposed and managed by Andrew David Hodgson, Nutrition Coordinator of Child Start, Inc., with extensive contributions from members of Child Start's Wellness Committee starting in May 2017. The original idea for this project was inspired by the Let's Move Outside! Conference hosted at Botanica, The Wichita Gardens, where attendees were challenged to think of new, creative solutions to encourage families to explore local parks and spend time together building, positive, active, outdoor memories. The storybook was written by Andrew David Hodgson, and illustrated by KaCey Green of Visual Fusion, LLC. Activities in this book were selected and written by members of the Wellness Committee, led by Meagan Wilkins, with final editing done by David Ziser and Andrew David Hodgson.

This project would not have been possible without the support from other community partners. Funding for this project was provided in part by the Sunflower Foundation: Health Care for Kansans, a Topeka-based philanthropic organization with the mission to serve as a catalyst for improving the health of Kansas. Visual Fusion, LLC finalized the layout and graphics of the activity book and storybook. Additional funding, guidance, promotion and other support were provided by Kansas Nutrition Council, the Health and Wellness Coalition of Wichita, Wichita Parks and Recreation, Health ICT, and the Office of Mayor Jeff Longwell.

The Science Behind Getting a Head Start on the Oregon Trail

Physical Activity

In young children, physical activity is vital, and will be called play. Kids should play whenever possible. Try to help young children have fun and form positive experiences while playing actively. All kinds of physical activity are valuable, even if some of these look silly or unproductive to adults. Try not to judge the result, even when doing a little coaching. Children need lots of play to help their bodies and brains develop. Skills will come over time as a child practices and grows. Young children should not be pressured to compete or to focus on a single sport. Variety of movement is just as valuable as variety in eating a balanced, healthy diet. Kids who try many activities when young are more likely to be adventurous, outgoing, well-balanced, and willing to face new challenges as they grow.

By Andrew David Hodgson, BS in Nutrition, and ACE Certified Youth Fitness Specialist

Creative Projects

Creative projects provide young children with an opportunity to express themselves. This enhances all developmental domains and promotes a positive self-image, individuality, and uniqueness. Through the creative process, children learn how to manage their big and little emotions. They will also develop critical thinking, language skills, and even enhance their motor skills. Remember to promote and acknowledge your child's creativity by asking them questions, giving positive comments, complimenting, and celebrating their final creations. Each unique project is their own, personal masterpiece!

By Meagan Wilkins, MPS-Organizational Leadership

Mindful Moments

Mindful moments can yield fantastic and lasting benefits for both children and adults, such as improved self-control, reduced anxiety or stress, and a more positive outlook. Mindfulness can take many forms. It is easy to get started, even with no experience. Some ideas to start with include taking three deep, slow breaths when feeling overwhelmed, going for a mindful walk or break outside, and mindful eating. An example of a mindful break would be sitting outside, closing your eyes, listening to the birds, feeling the breeze on your skin, and allowing your body to relax. Learning how to pay attention to your own body and the signs it gives when we are feeling different emotions is a great skill to develop at any age!

By Rachael Ely, BS in Psychology

Outdoor Play

Many adults have great memories of playing outdoors as a child, be it riding bikes, climbing trees, or running through sprinklers. Help your children create their own memories of playing outdoors! Outdoor play often involves running, jumping, climbing and throwing, which make children stronger, healthier, and more coordinated. Children who play outside also develop greater distance vision, show longer attention spans, and regularly use their five senses to explore the world around them. They smell new flowers, taste snowflakes on their tongue, feel wet grass beneath their feet, or hear the sounds of animals around them. Finally, sunlight helps release serotonin, a hormone that contributes to the feeling of well-being. So, children who play outside often are measurably happier, as well as healthier and more engaged!

By Kristina Everingham, Master of Social Work

Unstructured Play

Unstructured play is allowing children to play without intentional goals or structured plans from adults. This type of play is critical in brain development, and is also fun for children! Children must be given opportunities to explore and pretend, without adults guiding how their play should look. True unstructured play among multiple children allows social skills such as taking turns, working out conflict, sharing, and collaborating to evolve naturally, as well. Parents and guardians, remember to take a step back sometimes and let children take the lead in their play! Even with all the activities in this book, there will be plenty of time to do just that.

By Caroline Teter, Masters of Education in Teaching and Learning

Using This Activity Book - For the Adults

Use this activity book as a fun guide and starting point to visit local parks as a family.

The activities in this book are intended to inspire fun, imaginative, outdoor play which will contribute to healthy overall development and wellness in early childhood. Even with all the activities here, there will be lots of opportunity for unstructured play by children. Unstructured and unguided play is very valuable too!

This activity book has **8 Badge challenge pages, which should take 30-60 minutes to complete. There is also a Family Adventure Map of the Oregon Trail with 4 checkmark badges.** The checkmark badges are earned with 25 active hours. **Your family can complete the entire Oregon Trail challenge by spending 100 active hours together.**

That may sound like a lot, but kids should get at least 1 hour of active play daily!

Commit an average of 2 hours per week to active outdoor time, and your family will complete the whole challenge easily in a year!

The period of early childhood is usually considered age 3-8. Of course, children develop at their own pace, and there can be big differences even among children of the same age. **Feel empowered to make activities easier or harder for your child as needed.** Try not to give your child the “right” answers, or even to focus on “right” answers at all. Help them complete activities, but let them be challenged and think for themselves. If your child does not like a particular activity, you can replace it with something else. Options are great for kids.

Check out the [Getting a Head Start on the Oregon Trail Facebook page](#) to see and hear how other families are doing with their challenges, and for more ideas on early childhood and family activities to try in local parks.

My Pledge - For the Kids

I will do my best to complete this activity book and truly earn each badge.

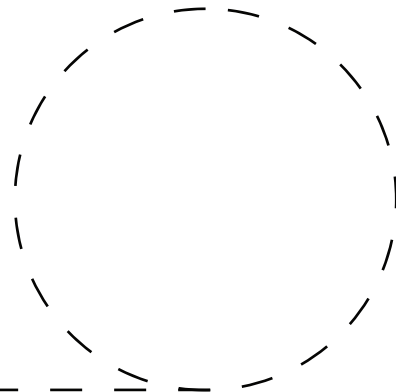
I will have fun, learn about nature, local parks, and being outside.

I will be safe by completing this book with adults I know and trust, staying near them and listening to them.

I will make new friends with other kids, but will not approach adults I do not know.

I can have fun without electronics. It feels great to move and play outside and be active!

HEALTHY SNACKER



Do you know how to eat healthy? Fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods give us the energy to play and feel our best. Some foods like soda, cookies, and candy taste good but are “sometimes foods” that can be bad if we eat too many of them. Become a healthy snacker with the challenges below.

Physical Activity

A healthy snack can help us to play longer and have more fun. Make up your own healthy “Oregon Trail Mix”. Try to include each food type below (look for whole grain and low sugar options). Give your new snack a fun name. Then head to a local park and get some great playtime in.

☐ Cereal Pieces

☐ Crackers

☐ Dried Fruits

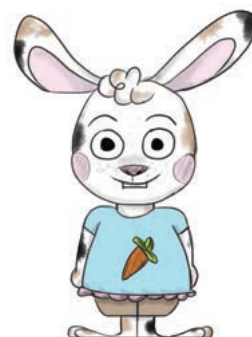
☐ Nuts or Seeds

Creative Task

Smoothies are a healthy and fun way to try new fruits and veggies! What is your favorite color? Can you help to make a smoothie that color? Try to use only fruits or vegetables to produce your favorite color. No blender? Visit a local shop that makes smoothies and let them know what your favorite color is, or try mashing some fruits together until soft at home.

Mindful Moment

Mindful eating means eating slowly, and using all the senses to enjoy our food. Pack a healthy picnic with all the food groups, focusing on lean proteins, and remembering plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Try eating mindfully. Hold each food in your mouth and chew slowly. Think about the taste and texture of each food. What is your favorite new food of the day?



My Recipe Cards

Work with a family member to write down the recipes for your new healthy snack and your smoothie. Use the space below. Then you can make your new treats again!

Trail Mix Name: _____

Ingredients:

Smoothie Name: _____

Instructions:

Extra Credit:

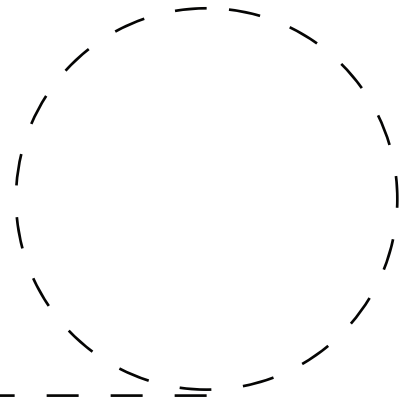
Soda is a sometimes food. Our bodies hold lots of water and we should drink mostly water to feel our best and hydrate. Try adding pieces of favorite fruits to your water.

How does it taste? What if you change the fruit?

Cross off your days without soda below. Can you make it a full week?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

WATER EXPLORER



Explore a local park with a body of water as a family. This might be a pond, lake, creek, river, marsh, or other wetland. Start by talking about safety. A water explorer never plays near water alone. Take a family walk around or along the body of water. What do you see and hear?

Physical Activity

Do you see any animals that live near or in this body of water? Try some of the activities below.

- ☐ Move like a fish
- ☐ Try skipping rocks if this will not disturb animals
- ☐ Make fish faces
- ☐ Throw mixed veggies like peas, carrots, and corn to feed animals
- ☐ Look for signs of animals or fish, like ripples on the surface, or tracks in mud or sand

Creative Task

What do you think it looks like underwater? Use the space on the next page to create your own aquarium. Draw, color, or cut out magazine pictures of plants, fish, and anything else you want in your aquarium.



Mindful Moment

Spend a few minutes sitting still and observing the water. Is the water still or moving? When water is moving, it can sound like it is talking, or roaring, almost like a crowd. When water is still, it can look like a mirror. Both kinds of water can be dangerous. We must always be careful around water. How does sitting by the water make you feel?

My Aquarium:

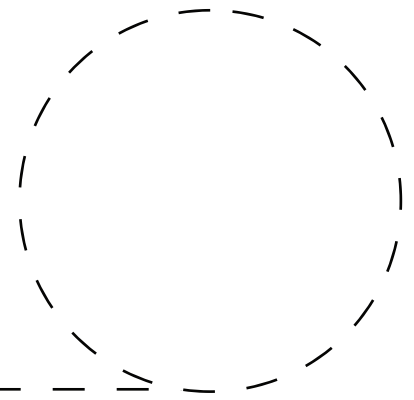
The tank below needs to be filled. Draw, color, paint, or attach pictures from magazines to create an underwater world below.



Bonus Challenge:

Now that you have explored a freshwater area, are you ready to float on the water? Ask a parent if there is a local park or body of water where you can try a paddleboat, canoe, kayak, or other watercraft together.

BIRD AND BUG BUDDY



Do you know that birds and insects, or bugs, do many important jobs in nature? A Bird and Bug Buddy observes without doing harm. There are many different types of birds and bugs. They come in many sizes, shapes, and colors. Winter may not be the best season for this challenge.

Physical Activity

Go on a nature scavenger hunt on a trail through woods or prairie or a local botanic garden. Keep your eyes out for birds and bugs. Check off ones you spot below. Tip: before you go, look up pictures of different bugs and birds in a book or website so you will know some to look for.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A colorful bird | <input type="checkbox"/> A spider or spiderweb | <input type="checkbox"/> Ants or other insects on the ground |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A bird in flight | <input type="checkbox"/> A colorful insect | <input type="checkbox"/> Bees or other insects at work |

Creative Task

On the next page, draw, color, or paint your own new bird or bug using any colors, or patterns you like. Is your creation big or small? How does your bird or bug live? Be sure to give your bird or bug a name.



Mindful Moment

Many birds and bugs are drawn to colorful flowers. Do you have a favorite color? Do you ever feel like a color? Colors can affect our mood. Try looking at different colors while focusing on how you feel.

My Bird or Bug

Try drawing and coloring your own new bird or bug below. Give it a name, and write in a little about this new species below your picture.

Name: _____

Is it big or small? _____

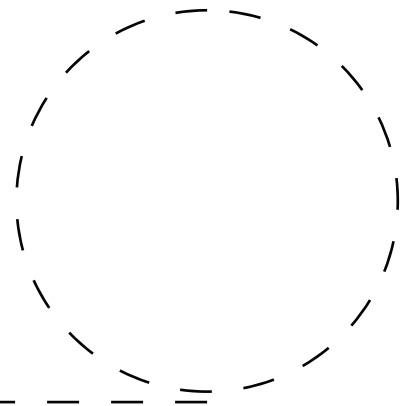
Where does it live? _____

What does it eat? _____

Spiderweb Challenge:

Using chalk, draw yourself a spiderweb pattern on the ground in a safe space. Can you walk on just the chalk lines of your web without falling? Ask a friend or your family to toss balls or a scarf to you. Can you catch them before they bounce away or fall outside of your web?

JUNIOR BOTANIST



Can you plant a seed and make it grow? Or recognize different kinds of plants and soils? Do you appreciate nature and take care of it? Work on the activities below to take your first steps towards becoming a Junior Botanist and earning your "green thumb".

Physical Activity

Go on a nature scavenger hunt in one or more parks. Try to include a park with trails through woods or prairie. Check off each box as you find a plant that fits that category.

☐ 2 types of leaves

☐ A tall, twisted tree

☐ Wildflowers

☐ A pinecone

☐ A nut or acorn

☐ Moss or an Ivy

☐ A young tree

☐ Grass as tall as you

☐ A plant with more than one Color

☐ Ants or insects at work on any plant

Creative Task

Now that you have gone on a scavenger hunt and looked at many plants, use space on the next page to draw and color, paint, or attach pictures of some of your favorite plants. Plants come in many shapes, sizes, and colors. Which type are your favorite?

Mindful Moment

Take a few moments to explore different plants by sight, smell, and touch. If there are flowers, try smelling a few. Do they smell good or bad? Try touching the bark of a tree. What does it feel like? What would the park you are in look like without plants? Would that be someplace you would want to visit or not?

One word for how my plant smells: _____

One word for how bark feels: _____



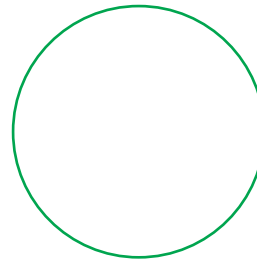
My Favorite Plants:

Draw, color, or attach pictures of some of your favorite plants below.

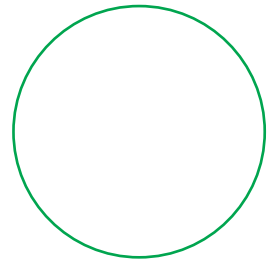
Plant 1

Plant 2

Use the circle to the right to press or draw and color your green thumb print. Having a "green thumb" means being good with plants. Compare your thumb pattern with a friend or family member. Do they look the same or different?



My Green Thumb



Second Green Thumb

Chance to Grow

Want a bonus challenge? Plant a seed in a small cup of dirt and keep it by a window. Keep the dirt damp and watch for a new plant to grow. You will need to be patient! Plants move much slower than kids do. It will be days and weeks while your plant grows. Track your new plant's progress on the lines provided.

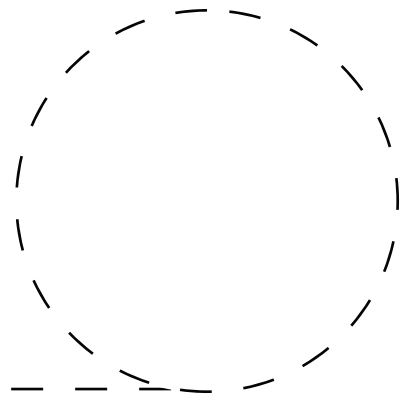
Type of Seed: _____

Date Planted: _____

Date of First Sprout: _____

Date of First Leaves: _____

PARK RANGER



Rangers are explorers and protectors of parks. To earn your Park Ranger badge, visit 3 or more local parks as a family and explore them. A ranger leaves a park cleaner than when he or she arrived. Is there any trash you can help pick up at the park or on your way home? Remember to wash your hands when you get home.

Physical Activity

What 3 parks did you visit? Write their names below. Use the space on the next page to draw or attach a picture from your favorite park. Try a new activity at each park. You won't know what you like without trying new things.

Name of Park

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Your New Activity

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Creative Task

Invent your own new game to play either with family or some new friends. Sometimes it is more fun to make up rules than to play by them. Use your imagination and the features around you. Are there other children you can make friends with and invite to play your game?

Mindful Moment

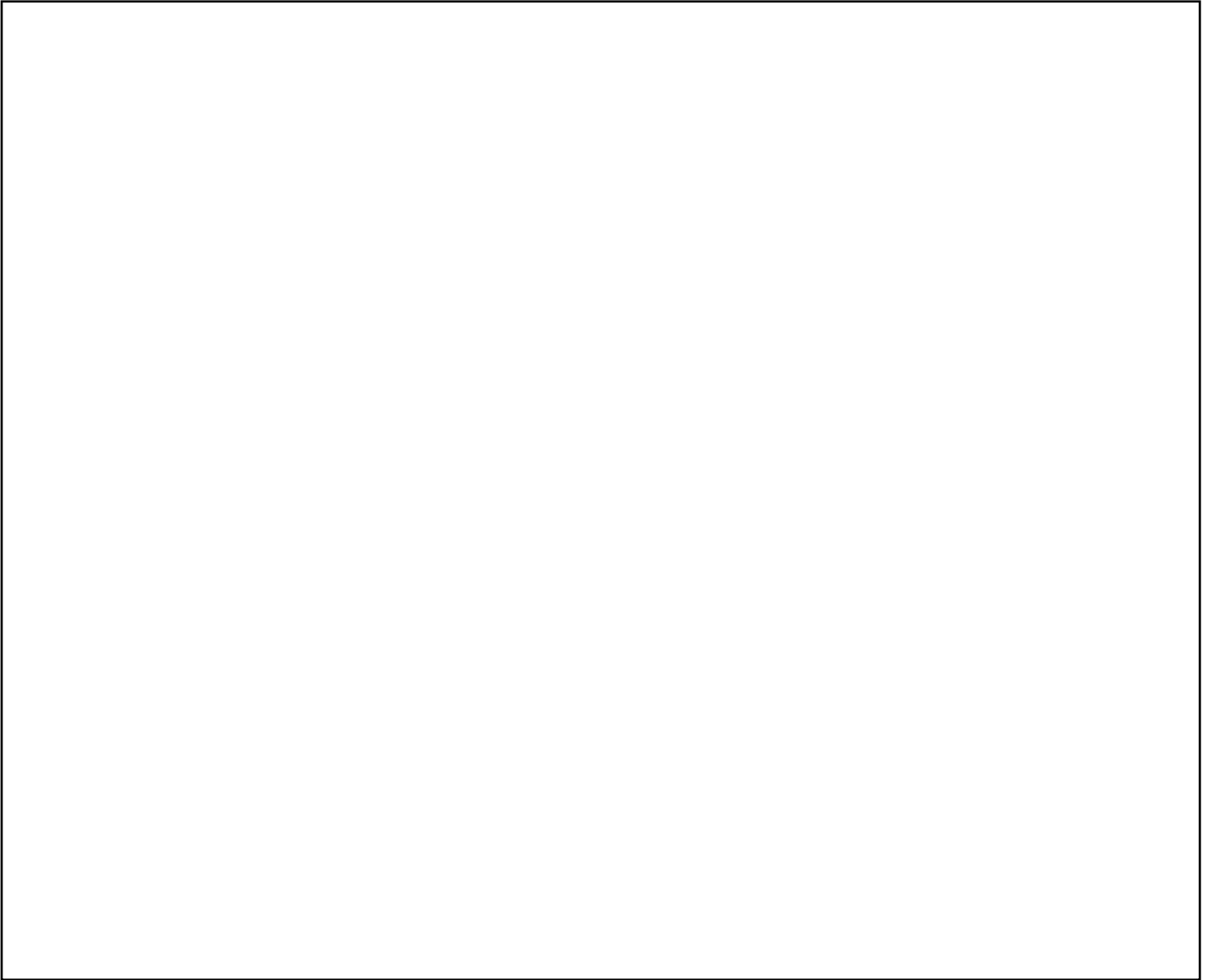
Rangers often quietly observe the world around them. Sometimes it is good to just sit and think things out. This can help us to understand our feelings and get "to the bottom" of things. For your next Ranger challenge, sit quietly for a few moments and look around the park you are in. What do you see? What do you hear? How do you feel right now?

Two words about how I feel right now: _____, _____



My Picture

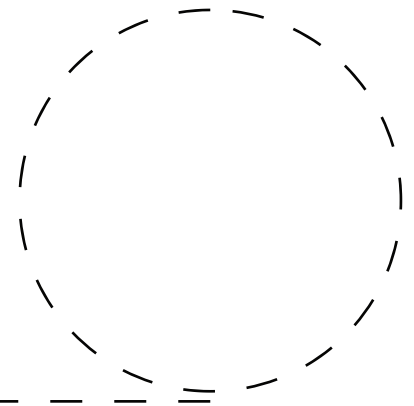
Draw and color or attach a picture below of your favorite park



Ready for More?

Now that you have visited 3 parks, are you ready to try camping as a family? On a clear night, you might be able to see stars above in the sky. Learn a little about constellations before you go on your camping trip and then try star gazing.

PLAYGROUND NINJA



A Ninja needs many skills. Different types of play help kids practice new skills, grow muscles, feel good, and even help our minds learn. It is also great fun!

Physical Activity

Ninjas can go anywhere. Conquer every type of play you can. Place a check by each type of equipment or activity once you are ninja-skilled at it.

- | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swings | <input type="checkbox"/> Slides | <input type="checkbox"/> Bridge | <input type="checkbox"/> Hanging Bars or Rings | <input type="checkbox"/> See Saw |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balance Beam | <input type="checkbox"/> Steps | <input type="checkbox"/> Climbing wall or net | <input type="checkbox"/> Hopping on one foot | <input type="checkbox"/> Skipping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk sideways | <input type="checkbox"/> Jumping | <input type="checkbox"/> Walk backwards | <input type="checkbox"/> Run as fast as you can | |

Creative Task

Create your own obstacle course with chalk, drawing straight lines, wavy lines, and shapes. Hop to squares ■ with both feet, stand in each triangle ▲ on one foot, and turn around once inside each circle. ● Walk along wavy lines ~~~ and skip along straight ones —————→

Mindful Moment

A ninja must be able to calm down quickly, and move carefully and quietly. Practice by talking with a parent or friends about how much fun you had, and what your favorite activities were. Try to stay calm as you talk about exciting things.



Do you know what a blueprint is?

"A blueprint is a practice drawing of something you want to make".

Use the Space below to help plan your chalk obstacle course before you draw it on the ground:

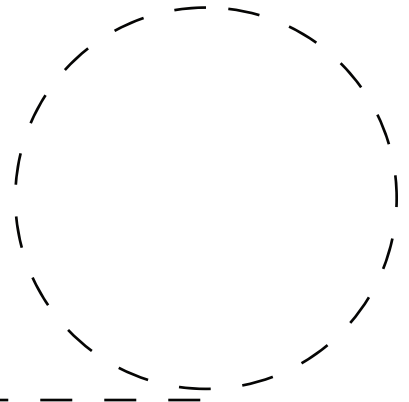
Start

Finish

Fast and Slow Challenge

Variety is important with play, just like with eating fruits and vegetables. Now that you are a Ninja at many types of play, can you move at different speeds? Can you run a little faster? Can you hop a little higher? Can you keep your balance while moving in slow motion?

SPLASH CHAMP



Pools, lakes, splash pads, waterparks, and even a sprinkler or hose can be fun options to play with water on hot days in summer. A splash champ is kind to other kids and adults nearby, only splashing those who want to play, and always plays with water safely. Listen to the grown-ups with you, and never play with water alone.

Physical Activity

Get wild with water on a hot day. This can be at a pool, splash pad, or even running through the sprinkler in the yard. This is a good chance to use your outside voice and whoop and holler while having fun. Try the wild activities below:

- ☐ Flap your arms like wings
- ☐ Stomp one foot like an elephant
- ☐ Jump up and down
- ☐ Get your hair wet
- ☐ Move and sound like any animal
- ☐ Move and sound like a machine

Creative Task

Find a sidewalk or use your driveway to paint pictures with water. (A little food coloring will allow for different 'paint' colors, if available.) Take your paintbrush and work quickly on your masterpiece. On a hot day, the sun will dry your picture quickly, but don't get upset. This means you can start new pictures that only you and your family will see before they evaporate. This can be a secret art.

What is one thing you drew with water? _____

Mindful Moment

Water cools us off. Sometimes when we are angry, we can feel very hot. Some kids even get red in the face when mad, like a volcano ready to burst with lava. Take a drink of cold water, close your eyes, and focus on how the water feels as it flows through your body. What does it feel like? Where does it seem to stop? Do you feel more relaxed?



Fun Fact!

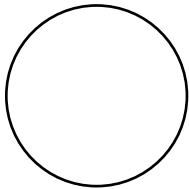
Did you know clouds are made of water? Remember when your water paintings dried up so quickly? That is called evaporation, which helps to form new clouds that will drop rain someday. There are many types of clouds. Try laying on your back and looking up at the clouds. Do the clouds look alike or different? Look at their shapes. Do any look like other objects?

Imagination Game

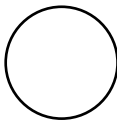
Lie on your back and close your eyes.

Imagine a big fluffy cloud slowly coming down next to you. What color is it? This is a special cloud just for you, and you will be completely safe and happy on it.

Climb up onto your cloud. It will take you anywhere you want it to. Let your cloud fly you to a special place where you can rest quietly and feel peaceful. What do you see and hear?



The color of my cloud: _____



Where I went : _____



Rain Rain, Go Away, Come Again Some other Day?

Do you like rainy days? Or do they frustrate you because you cannot play outside? A rainy day may keep us inside, but that is no reason to not have fun. Next time there is a rainy day, try some of these activities below:

☐ Play a board game

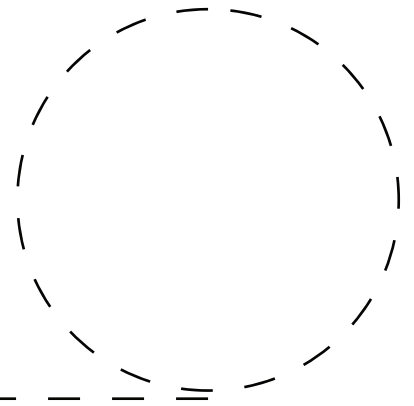
☐ Play a card game

☐ Play hide and seek

☐ Read a book

☐ Dance to a favorite song

SAFARI ADVENTURER



To be a Safari Adventurer, observe wild animals from a safe distance, without scaring or approaching them. Visit a zoo, wildlife refuge, local park, or local hiking trail as a family to watch for animals. Mornings and evenings are the best times to observe wild animals because many are most active at these times. When do you feel the most energy during the day?

Physical Activity

Can you move like different wild animals? Use your imagination and try to move like the animals below. Tip: Consider using your hands and arms as a tail or a trunk, and think about how fast or slow you are moving.

☐ Elephant ☐ Dog ☐ Squirrel ☐ Bunny ☐ Bird ☐ Crab ☐ Monkey

Creative Task

Start by listing 3 different animals you observed below. A wildlife expert knows how to classify wild animals. Write one adjective. This is a word that describes each animal!

Animal

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Adjective

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mindful Moment

Quietly observe an animal for a few moments. What is it doing? Do you think animals have different moods and feelings? What might your animal be thinking right now? What would you do if you were this type of animal?



Think about it:

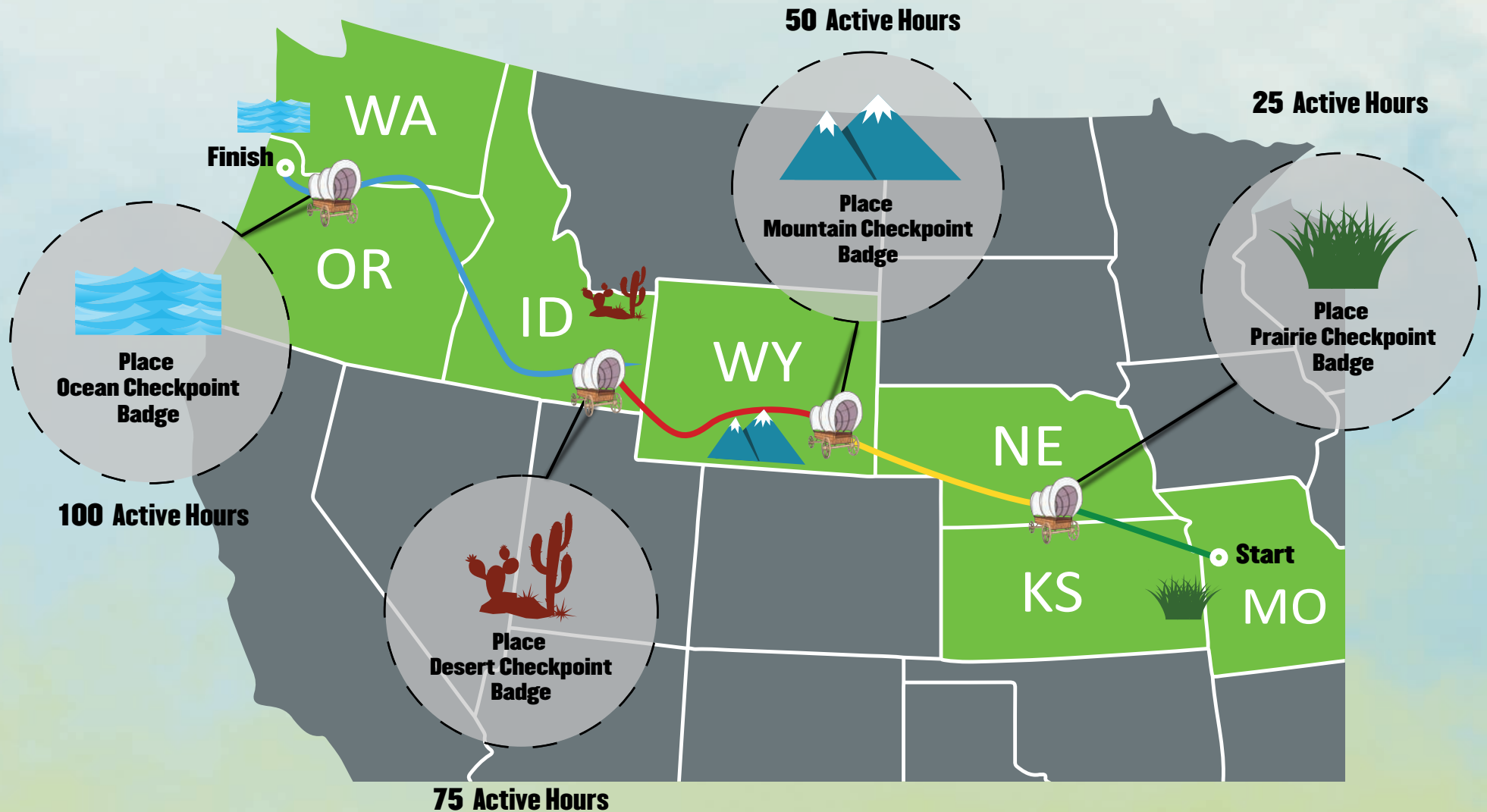
A wildlife expert knows how to classify animals by grouping them together based on common features. Write, draw, or add a picture for one animal in each category below.

| Feature | Animal Who Fits This Category |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Long Tail | |
| Spots or Stripes | |
| Eats Grass | |
| Big Ears | |

I wonder:

Why do you think when many animals try to hide, others are very brightly colored and want to be seen? Do you prefer to blend in or be seen most of the time? Try playing hide and seek for a little while to practice blending in.

Your Family Oregon Trail Adventure Map



Track your family's active outdoor time to progress along the Oregon Trail. Earn each checkpoint badge with 25 active hours. After 100 active outdoor hours, your family will complete the whole trail.



Park Ranger



Healthy Snacker



Playground Ninja



Splash Champ



Safari Adventurer



Water Explorer



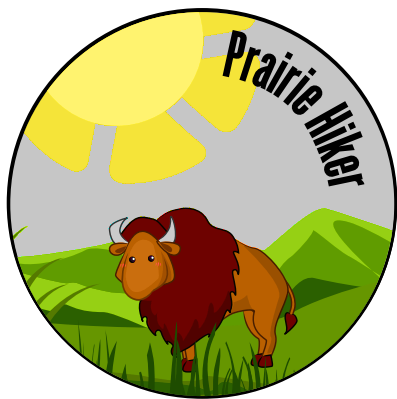
Junior Botanist



Bird and Bug Buddy



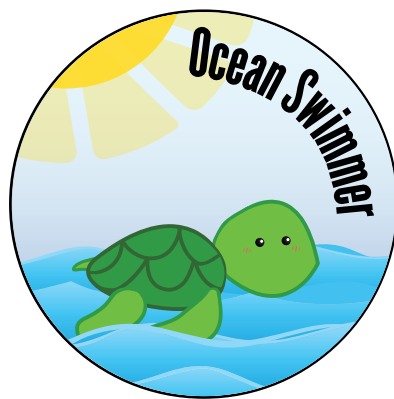
Desert Survivor



Prairie Hiker



Mountain Climber



Ocean Swimmer