



20 Fun and Easy Strategies for Assessing Learning Outdoors

Looking for some fun and easy ways to assess for learning while outdoors? Here is a list of ideas to add to your teacher toolbox.

1. **Checklists:** Class checklists are a great tool for collecting information about students learning for both knowledge and skills at any grade level and outdoor field study.
 - *Example: Nature Scavenger Seek and Find, shape or colour walks, or planting events*
2. **Concept Maps:** Using a piece of paper, write at least one key concept for the day's outing e.g. salmon. Give each student a post it note and ask them to write or draw a relationship to that word from their outdoor experience. Transfer this to journals, write reflections and/or create an oral field trip class story from everyone's entries.

- *Example: Salmon, water quality, food, habitat, life cycle, culture, earth, water, air and fire.*

3. **Demo Stations:** Using stations are a great way for students to show you what they know and can do.
 - *Example: Water quality stations such as pH, turbidity, and macroinvertebrate identification*
4. **Drawings:** Students may be able to show you what they know by creating a drawing or a series of drawings to demonstrate their understanding.
5. **Exit tickets:** could be used before you end your day or to get on the bus. Before students leave, ask them a question or pose a problem for them to solve based on the experience. Give them a few minutes and collect response "tickets" as they get on the bus.



6. Levels of Understanding: for quick, immediate assessment, this is a great strategy to check for knowledge or understanding during an activity and then adjust your next steps depending on the response. In a circle, ask your students a question and have them respond (on ready, set, go) non-verbally their level of understanding by holding up a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 finger indication. One finger response equates to lowest level of understanding and up to five being they completely understand.

7. Four Corners or Areas: stimulates student learning through movement and discussion, and it can also be used at the beginning and end of an inquiry as well as a formative assessment. Students are presented with a controversial statement or are asked a question. Identify four corners or four areas outdoors to represent an opinion or response to the question. Ask students to move to corner or area that represents their opinion or response. Ask the students in each corner to come up with a group answer to what might make them change their position as a kick off to a new inquiry or to reveal opportunities to extend learning. **Four corners** promotes listening, verbal communication, critical thinking, and decision-making.

8. Head, Heart and Hand: As a result of my learning: what did I learn? What did I feel? What will I do? What do I still wonder about? Divide a paper in four sections. Students are provided a few minutes of quiet reflection to put down their ideas in each section.



- **Head:** a new idea or "I am thinking about..."
- **Heart:** a feeling or "How I am feeling about this..."
- **Hand:** an action idea or skill

Share some as a whole group or pair and share.

9. Movement Map: have students create a map locating where they observed movements: animals, people, clouds or other moving things.

10. Photos: use technology to have students take pictures or provide evidence of learning. Share this evidence instead of post-it notes (as in #2 Concept Maps).

11. Postcards: have students make a hand drawn postcard with a summary of their field trip or experience. What would they share with someone who has never been to that location or had that experience?

12. Inside-Outside Circle: The inside-outside circle is a strategy that gives students the opportunity to respond to questions and/or discuss information with a variety of peers in a structured manner.

- Divide your students into two groups. One group is the inside circle and the other group forms the outside circle.
- Put a question or statement on the board.
- Give students at least ten seconds to think of an answer on their own and then share with student facing them.
- On your signal, have the outside circle move one step to the left or right and discuss the same question with the new student opposite them.



- Option: provide a secret addition to one circle, such as a new piece of information about the topic. Students in the other circle discover the secret/ new information through questioning techniques.

13. Field Journals: are used so students can make notes during the outdoor learning time. Set aside time at the beginning and end for students to capture observations about what they learned and what questions they have.

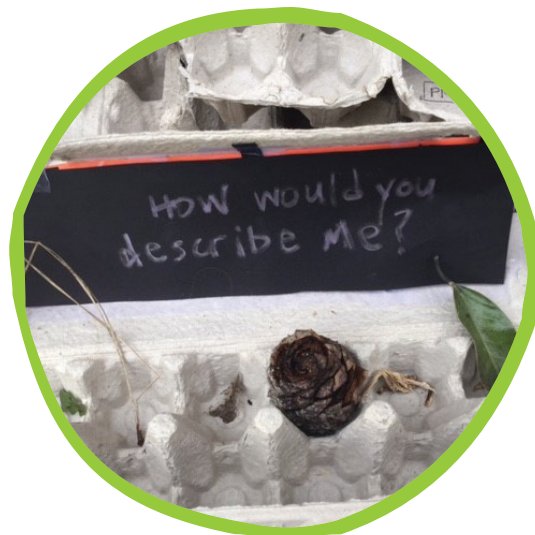
14. Journey stick: create a recording details of a field trip by tying coloured ribbons or appropriate materials found on the trip onto a stick.

- Journey sticks can be used in class to support reporting back activities as a talking stick or during sharing circles.
- Journey sticks celebrate events, facts and ideas to retell the story of a journey. Add to your stick: printed photos, leaf or bark rubbings, coloured yarn that represents a place or other visual items to represent an important idea.

15. List 10 Things: ask students to list ten things they have learned during the trip.

16. Outdoor Metaphors: give students a few minutes to find symbolic representations of their experience.

17. Pair-Share: The think-pair-share strategy is a great way to gather information about the level of understanding of your students. Ask students questions such as: "What did you learn during the field outing?" or "What connections can you make to your own life based on what you have learned so far?" Give students a few minutes to think about these questions. Pair students up with partners to discuss and then share with the whole group.



18. Time capsule: create a time capsule of your class learning before the day ends and plan for how and when the class would like it opened in the future.

19. Touchstone circle: to wrap up a field trip or experience, students gather in a circle and pass a stone. As each student takes the stone, they share something they learned.

20. Wild Art: use loose materials (cones, rocks, sticks etc.) found outdoors to create on the spot wild art about what they learned.

