



4-H Grab and Go: *Give or Take?*

Concept:

Use the senses to explore and identify the physical characteristics of trees and the benefits/services that trees offer our ecosystem and society.

Age Level:

Elementary, Middle, or High School: Grades 5 – 12.

Education Standard:

NS.5-8.6 Personal and Social Perspectives: Populations, Resources, and Environments

SET Ability:

Observe; Collect data; Demonstrate / Communicate with others

Life Skill:

Communication, Nurturing Relationships

Success Indicator:

Using various creative outlets, youth will demonstrate connectivity to nature.

4-H Curriculum:

Exploring Your Environment (www.4-H.org/curriculum/environment)

PREPARATION

Time: 10 minutes

Space: Area with trees, plus a separate area where the youth can sit down and hear a story and reflect on the experience (indoors or outdoors).

Materials:

- [The Giving Tree](#) by Shel Silverstein
- Dark bandanas for blindfolds. (Enough for ½ of the group)
- Paper
- Crayons
- Pencils/Pens
- A list of questions for each pair of youth

Background Information:

With today's fast-paced society and the increase in development, many youth are disconnected from nature. Some have never tripped over a tree root, while others have never explored **natural or man-managed forests**, fields, or open desert land even though they might be close by. After traveling through the U.S. for 10 years speaking to parents and children about their experiences in nature, author Richard Louv coined this phenomena "Nature Deficit-Disorder." It became apparent that many of the behavioral issues that children were having resulted from their spending less time outdoors. Children today spend half as much time outdoors as the children of 20 years ago.

Instructions:

1. Have youth sit in a circle.
2. As an introduction to this activity, read Shel Silverstein's, [The Giving Tree](#). Discuss the questions on page two, under "checkpoint" (Approximately 10 minutes). Use checkpoint questions to emphasize the importance of trees in our ecosystem and society.
3. Explain to youth: Through the next activity, every member of the group is going to use their senses, and especially touch, learn more about a tree. Let them know that they will be working in pairs and that one youth will serve as a sighted recorder and guide, and one youth will serve as the blindfolded tree explorer.
4. Using notebook paper, have the youth create a 2-column chart to take with them on their field study.
5. Take a list of the of the following questions for youth to answer on the field study:
 - a. When you feel the bark vertically and horizontally, are the grooves of the bark wide or narrow?
 - b. Can you wrap your arms around the tree?
 - c. Do you think it an old tree or a young tree?
 - d. Can you reach the leaves?
 - e. If so are the leaves smooth or prickly?
 - f. What shape is the leaf?
 - g. Does the tree bear fruit?
 - h. Can you hear the leaves rustle? Is it close enough to another tree that they are rubbing?
 - i. Can you hear wildlife in the area or in the tree?

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Give or Take? (Continued)

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT TIP

Using different creative outlets that enforce what is taught in school, after-school programs have been shown to increase learning introduced during the school hours. (National Academy research)

Checkpoint:

- What is the role of the boy in the story? (*Taker*)
- What is the role of the tree? (*Giver*)
- What did the boy get from the tree?
- Define the term “byproduct.”
- What byproducts do we get from trees?
- What happens when we keep taking from the trees?
- Who do you think is affected by “Nature-Deficit Disorder” and why?

Open Ended Questions:

1. How do you think you have changed from your close-up experience with your tree?
2. How was the experience different for those of you that were guides?
3. Do you think being able to see the tree to answer the questions in the chart compromised your nature experience?
4. If you were to read [The Giving Tree](#) now, do you think you would react differently to the story?
5. How can we change our society from being takers to givers?

j. Does the tree have a smell?

k. Can you find a root on the tree? If you can, try to follow it out until you can't feel it anymore. Estimate how long that root is in feet.

6. Select half of the group or let the group self-select to be blind folded, while the other half serves as guides and note takers. Give blind folds to members of your group who will be the explorers and ask them to put them over their eyes. Remind the sighted youth that they have an important job in leading their blindfolded partner and that they need to be aware of every step to guide their partner safely, giving clear directions on when to lift their feet, move to the left or right, etc.
7. Once outside with each blindfolded youth paired with a sighted youth, lead the group to a stand of trees and let the teams know that they will have 5 minutes to “get to know” their tree. Depending on location, a stand of trees might be 3-10, or it might be a larger number. Have the youth guide take their partner to a tree. If possible, have the teams spread out so that they are not all working in the same immediate area. If you do not have enough trees, place 2-3 teams at each tree. While the youth are engaging with their trees make note of what team is at what tree. Move among the groups to make sure that safety issues are addressed and provide encouragement or tips as needed.
8. Using the charts made earlier, make sure the guide asks their partner the questions and place answers in column A. The guide should use Column B to place answers to the same questions when partner is sighted.
9. After 5 minutes, call time and the guide will lead the partner to a safe place to sit. Using crayons and notebook paper each should draw the tree as they “saw” it. The blindfolded youth should keep his/her blindfold on while drawing the tree so he/she is using senses other than sight. Once they have finished drawing (3 minutes), the blindfolded partner can remove their blindfold.
10. Gather the groups together and share results. Ask the Open Ended Questions listed to the left.
11. Once this activity is complete, have the youth who had been blindfolded try to find their tree. If unsuccessful; the guide can show them the tree that they used for the activity.

Remind the youth partner who is the guide to be aware of poison ivy, other poisonous vines and insects for the partner who is blindfolded.