

# Decomposition Nature Walk

**Overview:** Searching for signs of decomposition and common animal decomposers is a fun way to support kids' ecological understanding and observation skills while spending time outside.

## Materials:

- Decomposition Scavenger Hunt Worksheet (optional)
- Clipboard (optional)
- Writing utensil (optional)
- Hand lenses (optional)
- Camera or phone (optional)



**Approximate Time to Complete:** 30 minutes

**Location:** Outdoor

**Grades:** K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12

**Season:** Spring, Summer, Fall

## Background Information

All outdoor greenspaces are home to various ecological processes, including decay and decomposition. Introducing kids to the importance of decomposition in the natural world is powerful if they can observe and interact with signs and agents of decomposition directly. It can also be a great way to introduce [composting techniques](#) in the garden. If getting kids to an outdoor greenspace isn't an option, consider an indoor decomposition activity like [Decomposition Observation Bags](#).

















## Instructions:

1. Discuss decomposition with kids in an age-appropriate way. Younger children learning about decomposition for the first time can focus on the basics: how dead matter gets recycled into energy for other organisms. Older kids can dive deeper into the biology of [earthworms](#), [fungi](#), etc.
2. Locate a nearby greenspace with diverse plant life and ensure that all children joining the nature walk have seasonally appropriate clothing and footwear.
3. After arriving at your greenspace, review any safety information you think is pertinent for your area (i.e., staying away from roads, staying alert for potentially harmful plants or animals, using tools safely).
4. Distribute the provided scavenger hunt worksheet or area-appropriate list of your choice among the kids if using them. Cameras can be a great tool for older kids to document their findings.
5. Encourage kids to look for as many signs of decomposition or animal decomposers as possible. Reminding them that decomposition often occurs in shaded, understory areas like beneath bushes, inside leaf piles, or at the base of trees. Have them check in with some of their senses: what colors, sounds, smells, or textures are they observing on their hunt?
6. Encourage kids to look respectfully, remembering that the areas they investigate are often home to many creatures. Gently poking or shifting material with a stick is often a great way to observe what lies beneath without greatly disrupting the habitat.
7. Come together after the nature walk to discuss what was found, where it was found, and anything kids found surprising or neat!

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# Decomposition Scavenger Hunt

Check the box for each sign of decomposition that you find! Turn your hunt into decomposer bingo by seeing who can find every item in a column, row, or diagonal first.

 <b>Pill Bug a.k.a rollie pollie</b>	 <b>Earthworm</b>	 <b>Leaf Skeleton</b>	 <b>Fly</b>
 <b>Lichen</b>	 <b>Beetle</b>	 <b>Slug</b>	 <b>Tree Mushrooms</b>
 <b>Termite</b>	 <b>Mold</b>	 <b>Moss</b>	 <b>Hollow Log</b>
 <b>Leaf Cover</b>	 <b>Ground Mushrooms</b>	 <b>Millipede</b>	 <b>Sow Bug</b>

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