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# A FIRST BOOK of NATURE

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Discover the natural world on your doorstep.

## \* Rainbow Game

Help your little ones develop sharp eyes and an attention to detail. Collect a few giveaway colour cards from your local DIY shop and take them into the garden/woods/park/beach. The object of the game is to find things that match the colours on the cards. Remind children to look at everything, from tiny pebbles to distant clouds. You can encourage your little ones to take you to and show you the BIGGEST things that match the colours.

## \* Pebble Cake Shop

This game is best played on a beach or by a river where stones are worn round by water. Choose a flat rock, or patch of sand, as your shop counter, then collect pebbles and stones of as many colours and patterns as possible to be the cakes. Tiny stones serve as money. Such a simple game but perfect for children under five (you can use shells too).

## \* Counting Sounds

This is another way to help build attention to detail and sensory skills. Perfect for the end of a long, tiring day to calm down hot, over-excited tots. Sit down somewhere comfy outside and shut your eyes. How many different sounds can you hear, and how many can you put a name to? This may start you on a detective journey to track down sounds and find out who made them!

## \* Planting Pips

This is good for the depths of winter when the weather may keep you indoors, but when citrus fruits are abundant. Collect pips from oranges, lemons, limes and grapefruits. Plant one per small pot of soil or compost (yoghurt pots with a hole punched in the bottom are good), water well, then tie each pot in a clear plastic bag, like a mini greenhouse, and put them in the airing cupboard. Water them so that they stay moist and when the pip has sprouted, bring the pots out into the light on a warm windowsill. You'll have little citrus trees by spring!

## \* Pond dipping

You don't need a huge lake for this, the teeniest back garden pond will yield plenty of creatures to look at. All you need is a net made from a bent coat hanger, pair of old tights, a transparent, plastic bowl, jam jars, and some old spoons. Cut the foot off the pair of tights and tape it to the bent coat hanger to create a net. Scoop up some weed in the net, tip it into the bowl and decant small creatures into jam jars for a closer look. Gently return the lot to the pond when you're done.

