



The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™

ACTIVITY

EXPLORING OUR SENSES



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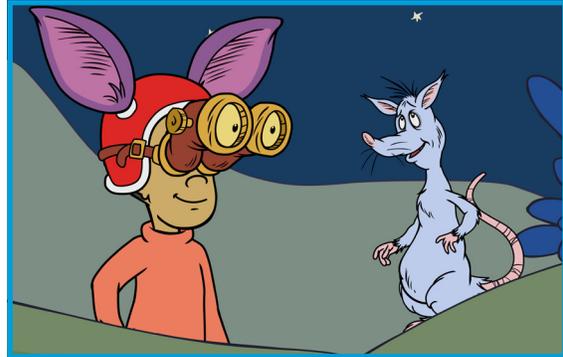
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Overview

Have you ever noticed how your child explores the world by using all of his senses? You can help him think more about how he sees, hears, smells, feels, and tastes by engaging him in indoor and outdoor sensory explorations. Help him learn about nocturnal animals by exploring the world after dark.



The Science Idea

Nocturnal animals like owls, bats, and opossums have sense organs that help them get information about their world, and move around, find food, and escape predators in the dark. Your child can explore how his own sense organs, especially his ears, nose, and skin, give him information in a similar way.

Skills: Making observations; identifying patterns and relationships
Age: 3–6 year olds

What to Do

- [Exploring Senses Indoors and Outdoors](#)
- [Exploring Senses at Night](#)
- [Take It Further](#)

Getting Ready

When you are out and about in the neighborhood, draw your child's attention to interesting sounds and smells. For example, as you walk by the bakery you can say "I wonder what those smells are?" or when you walk by the train station, "I wonder what is making those noises?" Invite your child to describe the smells and sounds and try to guess their sources.

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Exploring Senses Indoors and Outdoors

Indoors:

Hear: Encourage your child to use his ears to listen to sounds in and around each room of your home. For example, in the kitchen, draw his attention to the sounds of the refrigerator or the microwave. In the bedroom, he may hear a ticking clock or a radio. Invite him to close his eyes and ask “What do you think is making that sound? How can you tell?”

Smell: In the kitchen at mealtime, invite your child to use his nose to smell the separate ingredients as you measure them out, mix them, and cook them. Ask questions like “What do you notice about how the smells change when you mix two ingredients together?” and “What do you notice about the smell when things are cooking?”

Touch: Encourage your child to look at and touch fruits and vegetables. Invite him to close his eyes and compare the textures of two different things like an apple and an orange, for example. Ask questions like “How do you think they feel the same?” and “How do they feel different?”

Outdoors:

Hear: Invite your child to notice and identify the many sounds of a rural or urban environment. Draw his attention to similarities and differences in sounds by asking questions like “How do you think that bird’s song sounds different from the other one?” or “How do you think the bus horn sounds different from the car horn?” Encourage him to imitate the sounds with his voice.

Smell: Draw your child’s attention to seasonal smells like freshly mown grass, barbeques, or wood burning. Invite him to describe the smells and try to identify their sources. How can he tell where it’s coming from?

Touch: Encourage your child to touch and feel natural items like branches, leaves, and stones, and human-made structures like wooden telephone poles, metal signposts, and brick walls. Ask questions like “Which one do you think feels the smoothest/roughest?”

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Exploring Senses at Night

Getting Ready:

- Talk with your child about nocturnal animals. Depending on where you live, your child may have had many or few experiences with them. Has he ever seen or heard an owl? What about skunks, raccoons, bats, or opossums? Has he ever seen or heard smaller nighttime creatures like fireflies, moths, or crickets? How does he think those animals move around in the dark?
- Mention to your child that many animals use their sense organs to find out about things just as he uses his eyes, ears, nose, and skin to see, hear, smell, and feel. Nocturnal animals need to use their senses to move around, find food, and stay safe when it's dark outside.
- Talk about specific familiar animals. "How do you think a skunk or raccoon might use its nose to find food in the dark?" or "How do you think frogs and crickets use their sense of hearing to find one another in the dark?"
- Prepare your child for a nighttime adventure. Tell him that you will look for nighttime animals together and he can also use his own senses at night, just as nocturnal animals do. Ask "What kinds of things do you think we will see, hear, and smell if we go for a walk outside at night?"

Taking a Walk at Night:

- First, be sure to check the path you will take by walking it during the day to make sure it is safe.
- Take along a flashlight. Tell your child that humans have to use a flashlight because our eyes cannot see very well in the dark. The flashlight will help him see where he is going and may help him spot a nocturnal creature.
- Invite your child to be very quiet and look and listen for evidence of nocturnal creatures familiar to your area. In more rural areas you may hear owls, frogs, or crickets, and you may see skunks, opossums, raccoons, or fireflies. Even in the city, you can often see or hear crickets, fireflies, skunks, or opossums.
- If you see an animal, stop and watch it, and remind your child to stay at a safe distance. Encourage your child to describe what it looks like and what it is doing.
- Ask your child "How do you think this creature uses its senses to move around and find food?"

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- Remind your child to use his own senses to carefully listen to, smell, and feel the nighttime air. Ask questions like “What can you find out by using your ears to hear? your nose to smell? your skin to feel?”

Exploring Senses at Bedtime:

Spend time sitting in your child’s darkened room together, preferably with the window open. Encourage your child to use his own senses to explore the sounds and smells of the night. Then invite him to feel a few familiar objects in the dark and describe their shapes and textures. Ask “How do you think animals like skunks and raccoons use their senses to find out about things in the dark just as you are doing now?” Read a bedtime story together about nocturnal animals like *Where Are the Night Animals?* by Mary Ann Fraser.

Talking About Nocturnal Animals:

Encourage your child to share his nighttime observations with other family members. If he saw or heard some nocturnal creatures, help him describe them. If he didn’t see or hear any animals, have a family conversation about “Why do you think we didn’t see any nighttime animals in our neighborhood?” or “What kinds of sounds DO we hear in our neighborhood at night?”

Take It Further

A Salad Sensory Experience: Make a Waldorf salad full of different smells, textures, and tastes with your child. Encourage him to close his eyes. Can he identify an ingredient by smell? What about by touch? Is it small or large? short or long? rough or smooth? Invite him to taste each ingredient. Can he guess what it is? Remind him that he is using his senses to find out about the world just as a nocturnal animal does in the dark.

I Spy . . . : When you are out shopping, doing errands, or driving in the car, try playing the game “I spy with my little eye” Pick out something near you and describe it, saying for example “I spy with my little eye something round and red.” Encourage your child to look around and guess what you are describing. Then invite him to try it. Make up versions for the other senses like “I hear with my little ear”; “I smell with my little nose”; “I feel with my little hands”; and “I taste with my little tongue.”

My Five Senses: You can use the [My Five Senses](#) (below) chart to record your child’s sensory experiences indoors or outdoors, during the day or at night, or when you visit different places such as a grocery store, park, science museum, or zoo.

More Information About Nocturnal Animals: <http://42explore.com/night.htm>

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My Five Senses Explorations

My Location: Where am I?	What I see 	What I hear 	What I smell 	What I feel 	What I taste 

FRUIT

Use this chart to record your child's sensory experiences in your home, during a daytime or nighttime walk, or when you visit different places such as a grocery store, park, science museum, or zoo.

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More Ways to Discover and Learn

Go on an Adventure!

Many state campgrounds have relatively inexpensive sites available for overnight stays. Lying awake under the stars provides a total sensory adventure for your child and the best opportunity for seeing and hearing nocturnal animals. Many zoos, animal parks, and science museums have special exhibits of nocturnal animals. Many sites have “free” days or evenings or you may be able to obtain free passes from your local library.

Literacy Connection

What You Need:

- Crayons or colored pencils for drawing
- Markers for writing
- Hole punch and yarn or string for binding (optional)

Write a story with your child about what you experienced during your nighttime adventure. Invite him to draw pictures of what he saw and heard, as well as any nocturnal animals you observed. Write down his words to describe each picture. Bind the pages and read the story together at bedtime.

Look in a Book

I Love the Nightlife! (The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™) by Tish Rabe, illustrated by Aristides Ruiz and Joe Mathieu. Random House, 2010.

My Five Senses by Alike. HarperCollins, 1989.

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen. Philomel Books, 1987.

Where Are the Night Animals? by Mary Ann Fraser. HarperCollins, 1998.

New Words

Nocturnal: Being mainly active at night and sleeping during the day

Video

Watch the related video clip at PBS Parents (www.pbsparents.org/catinthehat/)