



4 Ant Café

OUTSIDE: Explore ants and their habits

CHILDREN WILL:

- Predict foods ants might eat
- Prepare an experiment to test their predictions
- Test their results in different habitats
- Discuss ant habits

You'll need:

- Animal card: ant
- White paper plates
- Apple
- Sugar
- Honey
- Leaves
- Grass
- Bread crumbs
- Any other food children think ants might eat
- Chart paper
- Marker
- Science notebooks

Notes from Sherri:

This activity involves waiting for ants to arrive at the Ant Café, so it may test children's patience. To make the experience positive for everyone, present it to younger children during self-selected activity time so they can choose to move in and out of it. You might present this experience as a group activity to older children, but take care to keep waiting to a minimum.

Did you know?

There are more ants than any other creature on earth. Ants are very social insects and live in colonies. When an ant discovers a good meal, it hurries back to the colony, leaving a scent trail to the meal. Hundreds of ants are then able to follow the scent trail to the meal. This activity will encourage children to discover ants and their habits.

Teacher preparation:

- Gather supplies.
- Survey play yard for most appropriate locations to feed the ants.

What to do:

1. Display the ant animal card to interested children. Talk with them about foods that they think an ant might like to eat. Record their ideas on the chart paper.
2. Show the children the foods you gathered, adding any that are available from the children's list. Encourage them to predict which food will attract more ants and record their predictions in their science notebooks.
3. Ask children to place small amounts of the various foods on different parts of the paper plate.
4. Place the paper plate in the play yard away from the building.
5. Prepare several paper plates and experiment with different locations to see if habitat affects the number of ants feeding at the "café." For example, place one plate in the grass and another on a hard-packed dirt area.

6. Record the children's observations about the ants that come to dine at the "cafe" on the chart paper.
7. Be sure to discuss the accuracy of their predictions.
8. Take pictures to help children revisit the experience in the classroom. Encourage children to use their science notebooks to further document the experience.
9. As children observe the ants, ask open-ended questions:
 - Which food do you think the ants will like best?
 - How do the ants know where the food is?
 - Why do the ants stay in a line?
 - What would happen if you rubbed your finger across the line (without harming the ants)?
 - What do ants eat when people aren't around?
 - Why did more ants come to one paper plate than another?

Related children's literature:

Dorros, A. (2000). *Ant cities*. New York, NY: HarperCollins. (Original work published 1987). ISBN-10: 0064450791. This nonfiction book describes ants and their habits.

Hoose, P.M., Hoose, H., & Tilley, D. (1998). *Hey little ant*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press. ISBN-10: 1883672546. This song, a conversation between an ant and a boy, leaves it up to the reader whether or not the ant should be squished. The story can start a conversation about killing insects.

Additional learning experiences:

GROUP: Invite a professional entomologist or a young 4-H entomologist to bring an insect collection to class.

OUTSIDE: Go on an insect scavenger hunt. Ask children to find a place where an insect has lived, something an insect has nibbled on, signs of where an insect has been, etc.

OUTSIDE: Look for ants on the play yard. Being careful not to disturb them, follow the ant trails to see where they lead.