

TAKE A NIGHT HIKE!

AGES

6–15 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY

Outdoor People

London, England, United Kingdom

outdoorpeople.org.uk

Big adventures can be had on your own doorstep. Even the most familiar places feel strange and different at night, in the dark, so why not invite your class (and maybe their parents) to come and experience the oh-so-familiar playground and nearby outdoor spaces in the mysterious nighttime!

BEFOREHAND

Plan your route and walk the whole length of it during the daylight. Part of the night hike should be done in total dark so you need to know the route well. A key part of your risk-benefit assessment should be to check where all of the hazards are on the journey, as well as identifying all the benefits that the children can enjoy.

Make sure children and adults wear the right gear. Bring extra hats and warm layers. Close-toed shoes may also be a good choice.

Ensure that at least two adults have good torches (flashlights). Consider bringing small extra ones for students.

If you don't have a playground, this works just as well in a park! You just need to be away from street lights.

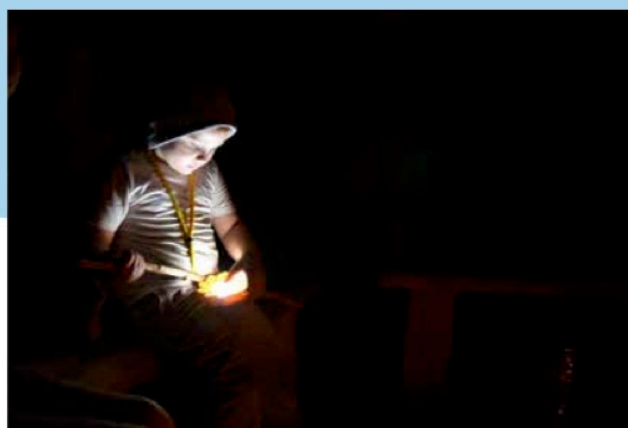
THE HIKE

Gather in an outdoor space to set the tone for the evening's activity.

Explain that participants can use their lights where they absolutely need to, but should try to use them as little as possible so they can practice using their night vision. Avoiding looking at lights helps our eyes adjust to the dark!

Think about taking the children under, over, through, and around the area and the objects in it (trees, benches, play structures, etc.). Don't make it too easy.

Aim for about 20 minutes of slow walking. Encourage participants to touch, smell, and listen, as well as try to see.



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Plan to stop and gather in an area that is peaceful. Listen to the dark. Ask everyone to be quiet and still for a minute or two, then pass around a stick (or other natural object). As the stick goes around, ask the participant holding it to tell the group about one great thing that happened that day. When everyone has had a turn, ask everyone to turn out their lights. Now howl to the moon! Hoo hoo hoooooooooo!

When you are ready, turn your lights back on and lead the group back to the start. Give the children 15 minutes playing around the dark playground (make lights available). Allow them to soak up the experience of feeling what it is like to be in this familiar place at night. This is a good time to offer hot cocoa to the adults in the party, too!

EXTENSIONS

Create night pictures or poems inspired by the experience.

Allow small groups to devise their own night routes.

Take photographs and videos and share them to inspire others!

Tip

Red light torches (flashlights) will not harm your night vision. Use red lights to provide a sense of security for any timid students, while still allowing them to experience the joys of the dark!