

Hot Day Walk



Before the Walk

For young children, using their senses is one way they learn fundamental skills and concepts. Young children learn best when they can control and act upon their environment. Walks that invite them to think about and explore concepts as basic as *hot* do much to enhance their understanding of the world around them. For older children, the benefits include being outdoors and experiencing things firsthand, rather than on a TV or video screen. There is also something to be said for simply having children slow down and pay attention to the smaller details of the world around them, such as how warm the weather is and how warm weather affects different things in the environment. A walk exploring the concept of *hot* provides an opportunity to

- 🔍 **observe firsthand how the sun or shade affects how warm or hot it feels**
- 🔍 **notice the effect of heat on various materials, objects, and vegetation**

- 🔍 **conduct experiments on how things react to being exposed to heat**
- 🔍 **experience different types of heat-related weather, such as dry, humid, windy, or still**
- 🔍 **consider the ways people respond to heat and how they protect themselves and their environment**

Prior to walking with the children, talk about the concept of *hot*. Even very young children are likely to have heard the word *hot*, perhaps as a warning by an adult such as “Watch out! It’s hot!” or “Let’s test the bath water to make sure it isn’t too hot.” Find out what the children in your group know about *hot*. Some children may need to be reassured that it is okay to observe and talk about hot things, such as hot weather, and that you will not ask them to touch things that are not safe.

Words to Use and Learn

boil	heat	humidity	sunshine
burn	heat stroke	melt	temperature
dehydrate	heat wave	sun	thermometer
dry	hot	sunburn	tropical
evaporate	humid	sunscreen	warm

Things to Bring on the Walk

- ✓ a spiral notebook that includes the children's questions and notes about experiences that might interest them (provocations), and for noting your observations of the children during the walk
- ✓ sunglasses and hats
- ✓ backpacks or paper bags for collecting things
- ✓ a camera
- ✓ a tape recorder or other recording device
- ✓ writing and drawing tools
- ✓ water bottles or other containers for holding drinking water and water to use for experiments
- ✓ items that melt easily, such as small pieces of chocolate
- ✓ measuring tools such as tape measures, rulers, or string
- ✓ sidewalk chalk



During the Walk

At the beginning of the walk, take a few minutes to walk quietly, encouraging the children to use their senses to help them learn more about how the heat affects the things around them as well as themselves. How do they feel after walking a while in the heat?

Children of all ages can be encouraged to use their senses to experience hot weather and the effect of the hot weather on the environment.

Using the Sense of Sight

How are colors in the natural world affected by heat? Are they brighter or more intense? Are they so bright they appear almost white? Do the children have to put on sunglasses to see certain things?

Are there shadows? What do they look like? Do they change according to the time of day?

How does the heat affect flowers, plants, and trees? Do their petals and leaves droop or curl under? Why?

Can heat be seen rising from the pavement or the hoods of cars? What does it look like? Where else can heat be seen rising?

What color is the sky? Are there clouds in the sky? Does the number of clouds affect the temperature?

Can the children tell how hot things might be by looking at them? How?

Are there many people walking about? Are there any animals such as dogs or birds?



Using the Sense of Hearing

How are sounds in the environment affected by the heat? Does it seem quieter or louder?

Are there any animal sounds, such as dogs barking?

What sounds might indicate it's a hot day? Do the children hear any sprinklers or people washing their cars?



Using the Sense of Touch

Can the children tell by looking at things how warm or hot they are, such as car hoods or sidewalks? Are some things hotter than others? Why?

Do some materials or colors soak up the heat more than others? Which ones?

Can the children feel a breeze in the air? Is the breeze warm or cool? Is the temperature more pleasant with a slight breeze?

Does It Melt?

Invite the children to explore which things melt quickly in hot weather and which things do not. Find a sunny area and set out a few items you brought that will melt fairly rapidly. Also set out a few items that won't melt, such as pebbles or small sticks. Continue the walk. Just prior to going back inside, check on the items and ask the children what happened while they were away. Did any of the items melt? Which ones did not melt?

Evaporation

Find a paved area near the center where you can pour some water to create a few puddles both in the sun and in the shade. Help the children use the sidewalk chalk to draw outlines of the puddles. Children can also use the string to measure the perimeters of the puddles. Have the children check the puddles throughout the day and note any changes. Discuss any changes in the puddles,

including which puddles are evaporating the quickest and why.

Hot-Color Names

Colors can be identified as "hot" or "cool" as well as by the feelings or emotions they evoke. Ask the children to notice which colors around them appear to be hot. Do some colors appear hotter than others? Have the children help create a list of all the hot colors they see and then create new names for the colors. For example, the children may notice several shades of red, all of which they call hot. What names can they think of for the different reds that might indicate their degree of hotness? If one red appears hotter than another, perhaps the hottest red is called "too-hot-to-touch red" while the other is a warmer "tomato-soup red." Consider continuing naming colors after the walk too.



After the Walk

Remind the children of how they used their senses of sight, hearing, and touch to explore the concept of *hot* during the walk. Ask what they learned about *hot* and what *hot* means to them. What did they learn from the experiments they conducted?

Older Children

The act of slowing down to observe things in the environment may have been a new experience for some older children. If this is the case, ask open-ended questions as a way of encouraging children to share their experiences. For example,

ask whether it is possible to explain a hot day without ever having experienced one. Invite children to use all of the descriptive words they can think of to describe a hot day to someone who has never experienced a hot day before. Suggest that they begin by describing what a hot day looks like, what a hot day sounds like, and what a hot day feels like. Afterward, ask them if it is truly possible to experience something without firsthand knowledge. How does experiencing something add to your overall understanding of it? Invite children to create color charts of hot colors using

crayons or colored pencils. Encourage children to blend colors to create new ones they may have observed outside. Point out that the names of colors are written on crayons and tubes of acrylic and oil paints. Wonder who invented all of the color names and when. Then have the children name all of the colors on their hot-colors chart.

Why do shadows grow longer or shorter? Why do their outlines become more defined or less defined? Have children research shadows and then create posters illustrating and explaining the changes in shadows.

Sunbathe, Sunbelt, sunburn, sunflower, Sunday . . . How many words can the children think of that include the word *sun*? Have the children make a list of all the sun words they can think of. Then challenge them to use all of the sun words in a story or poem.

Invite children to create different types of poems about the sun or heat, such as acrostic poems. Acrostic poems begin with a word such as *sunshine* or *evaporate* that is written vertically on a sheet of paper. Then use each letter of the word to start a new sentence or phrase that is related to the word. An acrostic poem for the word *sunny* might look like this:

SUNNY

So hot

Under the tree

No cool breeze anywhere

No relief

Yet the forecast said "Rain"!

Younger Children

Which activity or activities did the children seem to enjoy most during the walk? One way to initiate

a discussion is to show them the photos you took and ask, "What were you doing in this picture?" You will be able to tell based on the children's descriptions which ones held their interest the most. Then think about how children might extend their learning through a related project, either individually or with a small group. For example, read books or talk with the children about shadows. What are shadows? Does everyone have a shadow? Where do shadows go at night? Why are shadows always black? Create an area inside dedicated to shadows and include children's dictation and shadow artwork they create.

Add new words related to heat and the sun on an existing word wall or a weather word wall.

Sing songs or perform fingerplays about the sun. Can the children make up their own songs or fingerplays about the sun?

Have the children begin Opposites Books. Talk with the children about opposites, such as hot and cold, black and white, over and under, big and small. The first page could be a hot-and-cold page. Invite children to draw pictures of things that are hot and things that are cold. Continue to have children create other pages of opposites. After a few weeks, help the children assemble their Opposites Books. Then invite each child to share his or her book of opposites with the group.

What is hot and what is not? Have the children help you identify things in the room that are hot or not hot. Write *hot* and *not hot* on several index cards. Then work with the children to tape the labels to the appropriate areas or things in the room that are hot and not hot. This is a good time to review safety rules concerning hot things as well.



Revisiting the Walk

Throughout the summer months, each time you take the children on a walk, ask them whether the current day is hotter than or not as hot as the previous days you went walking together. How can they tell? Did they wear a sweater the last time

they went for a walk? Are they wearing a sweater this time? Is the season about to change? What things tell them that a different season may be approaching?



Books

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