

# Living Things and the Environment: Day 1

This week, Weekday Wonders will help young scientists explore ecosystems and the world around them. They will start by learning about living and nonliving things, then find out more about the needs of plants and animals. Toward the end of the week, young scientists will discover how plants and animals rely on each other and determine how the parts of an ecosystem share resources.

These curated activities are listed in a suggested sequence but may be done in the order that works best for you and your young scientists. Learn more about this series in the <u>Introduction to Weekday Wonders</u>.



## **Question of the Day** What are living things?



### **Daily Nature Journal**

Use the <u>Guide to Nature Journaling</u> to help your young scientists complete the daily nature journal for the day. They should use this format each day to help them learn about the world around them, find patterns, and deepen their awareness of nature.



### Is it Living? Card Sort

Either print out the "Is It Living?" cards (found on page 4) or pull up the cards on a device for your young scientists to see. If you print out the cards, cut them apart. Ask your scientists to

identify if each item is living or not living. If they are using cards, they can sort them into two stacks. If they are viewing them on the screen, have them make a list of the card numbers and whether the picture is of a living or a nonliving thing.

For **younger scientists**, consider only giving them cards 1 through 10. Include all 16 cards for your **older scientists**. The last six cards include some more challenging items.

Once your young scientist has identified all the items, talk about why they think each is living or nonliving. Professional scientists have different characteristics that they use to determine if something is living. Some that your young scientists might use to help them are:

- movement;
- using energy or needing food;
- growth;
- ability to reproduce, make babies, or make more living things like it; and
- the ability to respond to a stimulus, such as a touch, light, warmth, or chemicals.

#### Answers to the "Is It Living?" Card Sort

- 1. Rocks: not living
- 2. Penguin: living
- 3. Hat: not living
- 4. Turtle: living
- 5. Butterfly: living
- 6. Wolf: living
- 7. Hippopotamus: living
- 8. Fish: living
- 9. **Flower: living**. Some people do not realize that plants are alive, but they do move, use energy, grow, reproduce, and respond to stimuli.
- 10. **Tree: living**. Some people may not realize that plants are living things, but they do move, use energy, grow, reproduce, and respond to stimuli.
- 11. **Mushroom: living**. Mushrooms are decomposers that help break down dead materials, so some people get confused about whether the mushrooms themselves are living.
- 12. **Coral: living**. This is called a brain coral. Coral are made up of colonies of small animals.
- 13. **Fire: not living**. Young people sometimes think that because fire can "move" as it flickers that it is alive. However, it does not meet the other characteristics of living things.
- 14. **Water: not living**. Like fire, some people think that water can "move" and is therefore living. It does not meet the other characteristics of living things.
- 15. **Jellyfish: living**. Jellyfish are invertebrates, or animals that do not have backbones. They also do not have hearts, lungs, or brains. They spend much of their time suspended in water, so people sometimes do not realize that they are animals. However, they do move, grow, use energy, reproduce, and respond to some stimuli.
- 16. **Sea star: living**. Sea stars are not fish, so scientists do not generally call them starfish. They are animals that are invertebrates like the jellyfish. They can live in many different ocean areas warm, cool, shallow, and deep (as far as 6,000 meters or 20,000 feet). They are found in all oceans in the world.



### **Nature Journal**

**Part I:** Ask your young scientists to go outside and draw the area around where you live. Tell them to pay attention to the grass, trees, fences, playsets, and other details in their drawing.

If your scientists can write, ask them to label their drawing. Otherwise, have them tell you about it and add labels using their descriptions.

**Part II:** Have your scientists circle living things with one color and nonliving things with another color. Alternately, they can draw a circle around living things and a box around nonliving things. For older scientists, you can have them circle at least 5 items for each category. For younger scientists have them identify at least 1 or 2 living and nonliving things.

*Note:* We encourage young scientists to go outside with their nature journals two different times during the day. If this is not possible, have them complete Part I when they do their daily nature journaling and then do Part II after the "Is It Living" activity.



### **Living Things Freeze Dance**

One characteristic of living things is that they can all move—but they move in different ways.

To play "Living Things Freeze Dance," prepare some music on a phone, computer, radio, or other device. Ask your young scientists to gather in an open area and call out a prompt. While the music plays, they should move like the living thing you listed. When you turn the music down or off, they should FREEZE and not move at all. Call out a different prompt and turn the music on again. Scientists should move like the living thing in the new prompt until you stop the music, then they should FREEZE!

You can also write prompts on slips of paper and allow your scientists to draw them out for each round. Once they understand the game, they can also have fun making up their own prompts.

#### **Possible prompts:**

- Kangaroos move by jumping. Jump like a kangaroo during the music.
- Flowers slowly turn toward the sun. Act like a flower during the music.
- Dogs love to run and play. Move like a dog to the music.
- Jellyfish squeeze their bodies to move up in the water. Move like a jellyfish to the music.

# Is it Living? Cards



