

Sound Mapping in the Outdoors

Age: 6+ years

Duration: 20 mins

Materials:

- A5 Card and Pencil (one set per participant)
- A pencil sharpener
- A quiet outdoor space

This activity is very effective at calming and focusing a group, enabling participants to have an intense personal experience in nature. It has a lasting positive impact on participants' observational skills in the outdoors.

Directions:

- In the outdoors (on the school grounds or in a local park) get each participant to pick a spot to sit or stand, at least 1 metre away from their neighbour, but within a specified safe boundary.
- Tell the group they will be testing their ears' super-powers!!
- Explain the activity: Students will be drawing or writing down the things that they can hear; they will mark them on their A5 card with respect to where they heard them. They will start by drawing a circle in the centre of their card, to indicate their own position. Then they will fill in the noises they hear around that circle in the 'correct' direction e.g. if they hear something to their right they draw it to the right of the circle on their card; if they hear something in front of them, they draw it on the top of the card above the circle. Demonstrate this, by standing in front of them and filling in your own card as you explain.



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- The drawings should not be detailed; the focus is on listening e.g. if they hear water running, encourage them to just do a wavy symbol ; or for a bird, a music note; or for rustling leaves, a simple leaf and so on. Or just write the word.
- If you are working with a young group you could get them to suggest things that they might expect to hear. Or give them a few suggestions of things to listen out for to start: the wind, leaves rustling, water flowing, birds singing, cars passing etc.
- Get started: Give each participant a piece of card (A5) and a pencil. Instruct them to draw a small circle in the middle, to indicate them self. And to start filling in their 'sound map'.
- If the group are giddy to begin, explain that anybody who makes noise will have to leave, as the activity won't work otherwise.
- Give the group a good amount of time to settle into this exercise. The group typically enters into a really calm silence- you will likely be surprised how quiet and peaceful they become.
- After you think they've spent enough time (usually no more than 5 minutes), everyone can circle up and take it in turn to share something special that they noticed.



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Extensions:

- This exercise ties in very well with the Bird Song ID Activity, which is classroom-based. It can be found on the Green-Schools Website, in the Biodiversity resources section (link below).
- With older groups (8+ years) you could follow this activity up with the Web of Life Activity, which can also be found on the Green-Schools Website, in Biodiversity 'Resources' section
www.greenschoolsireland.org/

