

APPRECIATING OUR NATURAL WORLD

HEALTHY SNACK: WILD FRUIT LEATHERS

Skill Focus: Learning to prepare and preserve food for adventures

Ingredients:

- 2 to 3 cups chopped fruit (e.g., strawberries, apples, peaches or a mix — fresh or thawed from frozen)
- 1-2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup (optional, depending on fruit sweetness)
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- Blender or food processor
- Baking sheet
- Parchment paper or silicone baking mat
- Oven (or dehydrator)

Instructions:

- 1. Blend It Up** — Wash and carefully chop the fruit, removing any stems or cores. Add fruit to a blender with lemon juice and an optional sweetener. Blend until smooth.
- 2. Prep Your Pan** — Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat. Pour the fruit puree onto the sheet and spread it evenly with a spatula — about 1/8 inch thick.
- 3. Bake Low and Slow** — Set your oven to 170°F (or the lowest setting). Bake for 4-6 hours until the fruit is no longer sticky and peels up easily from the edges. (Or use a food dehydrator for 4-6 hours at 135°F.)
- 4. Cool and Cut** — Let it cool completely. Cut into strips and roll up with the parchment still attached to keep them from sticking. Store in an airtight container.

Trail Tip: These fruit leathers are perfect for hikes — lightweight, no mess and full of natural energy!

Optional Flavors:

- Add a pinch of cinnamon to apple or pear blends
- Mix berries with banana for a creamy texture
- Use Oklahoma seasonal fruits like peaches or blackberries for a local twist

BE SAFE WHILE NAVIGATING NATURE

- Participate with a family member, club or trusted adult.
- Always let someone know where you're going.
- Dress for the weather and stay hydrated.
- Be aware of your surroundings — respect wildlife and watch for hazards like poison ivy or snakes.



FIRST DAY HIKE CHALLENGE: STEP INTO THE NEW YEAR!

Goal: Start the year strong by getting outside and moving your body!

Join a National Movement!

This challenge is part of the America's State Parks First Day Hikes initiative, a nationwide effort that takes place in all 50 states on Jan. 1. It encourages individuals and families to kick off the new year with fresh air, physical activity and time in nature.

Whether you choose a guided hike at an Oklahoma state park or head out on your own trail, a First Day Hike is a healthy and inspiring way to start the year. Learn more about the initiative at stateparks.org. Can't make it out on Jan. 1? That's OK! Just get outside and take your first hike of the year when it works for you.

Your Challenge:

- **Go for a hike on January 1** — Choose a local state park, community trail or even a neighborhood path.
- **Move your body** — aim for at least 1 mile, or choose a distance that feels right for you
- **Take a photo** — capture a favorite view, your hiking crew, or a wildlife sighting
- **Reflect** — What are you walking away from this year? What are you walking toward next year?

Why It Matters:

Getting outside, even in the winter, has incredible benefits:

- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Increases energy and focus
- Improves heart and muscle health
- Boosts your mood and motivation

Whatever your motivation, an Oklahoma hike makes for a New Year's Day you won't regret!

Reflection Prompts:

Use these as journaling ideas or discussion starters:

- "I feel most alive when ..."
- "Something new I saw or heard today was ..."
- "This hike reminded me to ..."

Bonus Activities:

- **Nature Hunt:** Spot 3 interesting things on your hike (feather, mossy log, animal tracks)
- **Leave It Better:** Pick up one piece of litter on the trail
- **Mindful Moment:** End your hike with 3 deep breaths and say 3 things you're thankful for

Share Your Adventure:

Encourage youth and families to share their experience on social media using:

#FirstDayHike #OK4HOutdoors #4HHealthyLiving



WINTER HIKE ESSENTIALS: BE PREPARED, STAY SAFE!

Why Be Prepared for a Winter Hike?

Winter hikes can be beautiful and peaceful, but they also bring special challenges — cold temperatures, shorter daylight and changing weather.

What to Pack for a Winter Hike:

Here are items every explorer should bring:

Clothing & Layers

- Warm layers (base layer, fleece, and waterproof jacket)
- Hat and gloves (keep your head and fingers warm!)
- Wool or thermal socks
- Comfortable, weather-appropriate hiking shoes or boots
- **Tip:** Dress in layers you can take off or put on as you warm up or cool down.

Food & Water

- A full water bottle (even in winter, your body needs hydration)
- A healthy snack for energy (like granola, fruit leather or trail mix)
- Safety Gear

Map or trail guide

- Whistle (for emergencies)
- Flashlight or headlamp (in case it gets dark early)
- Small first aid kit
- Hand warmers (optional)

Winter Safety Tips:

- Always check the weather forecast before heading out
- Tell someone where you're going and when you'll be back
- Stick to marked trails
- Watch for ice or slippery spots
- Start early — winter days are shorter
- Never hike alone



MINDFUL MINUTE: NATURE JOURNALING

Welcome to Nature Journaling!

Nature journaling helps you slow down, observe your surroundings and reflect on the world around you. You don't have to be a great writer or artist — just be curious and open to what you see, hear and feel in nature.

How to Use the Prompts

1. Find a Quiet Spot

Go outside or near a window. Sit somewhere comfortable where you can see and hear nature — like a garden, trail, park bench or your backyard.

2. Take a Nature Minute

Before writing, take a moment to settle in. Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths. What do you hear? Feel? Smell? Let your body relax.

3. Open Your Journal

Turn to a fresh page. Write today's date at the top. Choose one journaling prompt from the list to focus on today. There's no right or wrong choice — pick what inspires you!

4. Write or Draw Your Response

Use words, pictures or both.

- Draw what you see
- List colors or sounds
- Write a story or reflection
- Create a comic or poem

Helpful Tips:

- Bring a pencil or colored pencils
- Clipboards or cardboard make it easy to write outdoors
- Be respectful — look, listen and leave nature as you found it

Nature Journaling Prompts

1. Draw What You See

- Look around and find something that catches your eye — a plant, insect, animal or cloud.
- Draw it in your journal and write 3 words to describe it.

2. Sounds of Nature

- Sit quietly for one full minute. Close your eyes and just listen.
- List or draw 3–5 sounds you hear. Can you guess where each sound is coming from?

3. Nature's Storyteller

- Choose a tree, bird or bug and imagine what kind of day it's having.
- Write a short story or comic strip about its adventure today.

4. Color Hunt

- Find 5 different colors in nature.
- List or draw each one and describe what you found (e.g., red leaf, yellow flower, gray rock).

5. Weather + Mood Check-In

- What's the weather like right now? How does it make you feel?
- Describe or draw today's sky and write a sentence about your mood.

NATURE CRAFT: MAKE YOUR OWN PAPER BAG NATURE JOURNAL

Nature Time: 20–30 minutes

Purpose: Create a reusable, kid-friendly journal to record nature observations, sketches, pressed leaves and more!

Supplies Needed:

- 3 to 5 brown paper lunch bags
- Hole punch
- Yarn, twine or ribbon (12–18 inches)
- Markers, crayons or colored pencils
- Stickers, leaves, feathers or small nature items for decoration
- Optional: glue stick, washi tape, stapler, construction paper

Instructions:

1. Fold and Stack

- Take your paper bags and fold each one in half (hamburger-style).
- Stack the folded bags on top of each other with the folded edges all on the same side.

2. Punch Holes

- Punch two holes along the folded edge—about 1 inch from the top and bottom.

3. Bind Your Journal

- Thread yarn or ribbon through the holes and tie securely in a bow or knot to hold the pages together. This is your journal spine!

4. Decorate the Cover

- Use markers, stickers, drawings, or glued-on natural items (like pressed leaves or flower petals) to decorate the front of your journal.
- Add your name and a fun title like “My Nature Journal” or “Explorer’s Log.”

5. Use the Pockets!

- The open ends of the folded bags create little pockets! You can tuck in:
 - Pressed leaves or flowers
 - Bark rubbings or nature drawings
 - Notes or small treasures from your hike (nothing living, please!)

Ideas for Inside Pages:

- Draw what you see on your walk
- Tape in a leaf and label it
- List 3 things you heard in nature today
- Write a short poem about the weather
- Use prompts from your Nature Navigators lesson!

Optional Add-Ons:

- Glue blank paper or lined paper onto each page for writing
- Add a “table of contents” to the first page
- Include a small pencil pouch by stapling a snack bag inside the back cover

EXPLORE: OUR NATURAL WORLD

Explore the 7 Principles of Leave No Trace to understand how you can implement minimum impact practices while visiting the outdoors.

Self-Paced Learning

- **Leave No Trace Principles (Int.org/why/7-principles):** *“The 7 Principles of Leave No Trace provide an easily understood framework of minimum impact practices for anyone visiting the outdoors.”*
- **Leave No Trace Courses (learn.Int.org):** *“Learn from our dedicated scientists or enhance your skills by exploring our comprehensive online courses designed for those eager to make a meaningful difference.”*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How does spending time outside make you feel?
- What do you want to explore next in nature?

4-H CONNECTION

This lesson supports 4-H Healthy Living by encouraging outdoor physical activity, mindfulness, and healthy snack preparation. It also supports 4-H Natural Resources and STEM through birding, photography and observation of wildlife.

EARN YOUR STICKER!

To earn your winter Nature Navigators sticker badge:

1. Complete at least three activities from this lesson.
2. Take a photo of yourself completing one of the activities.
3. Answer these three questions: I liked... I wish... I wonder...
4. Submit your photo and answers in your ZSuite registration with your name, address and county.



OSU EXTENSION
4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Learn more at 4h.okstate.edu