

# Beach Journaling: Sit, Watch & Wonder

**Goal:** Begin a family nature journal through quiet observation and reflection.

**Where:** At the beach (or any outdoor space).

**What to do:**

1. Find a comfortable spot where everyone can sit quietly.  
Set a timer for two minutes of silence – no talking, just watching and listening.  
What do you see, hear, feel, and smell?
2. After the quiet time, open your Beach Journal (a small notebook or folded paper works great).  
On one page, draw what you notice – the shape of a shell, a bird in flight, or wave patterns.  
On the next page, write a few words or sentences:
  - What colors did you notice?
  - How did the air feel?
  - What sounds stood out most?
  - What made you curious?
3. Share your observations as a family – each person might notice something different!



**Science Connection:**

Scientists use field journals to record what they see and sense in nature. Careful observation helps them discover patterns and changes over time.

**Extension Ideas:**

- Add to your Beach Journal each time you visit the shore – record the date, weather, tides, and new discoveries.
- Compare entries: What changes with the seasons?
- Bring your journal to parks, trails, or even your backyard to build a year-round nature journal.

**Parent Resources: Getting Started with Nature Journaling**

If you're new to nature journaling, these resources offer easy, encouraging ways to begin:

- The Inner Naturalist – [theinnernaturalist.com](http://theinnernaturalist.com)
- Book: *Keeping a Nature Journal: Discover a Whole New Way of Seeing the World Around You* by Clare Walker Leslie & Charles E. Roth
- Try this: Start with five-minute sketches or word lists – don't worry about being perfect. The goal is to notice and enjoy, not to make art!

# Beach Treasure Sort & Discover

**Goal:** Explore your beach treasures like a scientist by sorting and noticing patterns.

**Where:** At the beach or at home with your collected items (or photos if collecting isn't allowed).

## What to do:

### 1. Collect your treasures!

Look for small natural items — shells, seaweed, driftwood, pebbles, sea beans, or even small pieces of marine debris.

*Tip: Bring a bucket or reusable bag for collecting.*

2. **Spread out your finds** on a towel or table. Start exploring together — touch, feel, and describe what you notice.

3. **Sort your treasures** in as many ways as you can!

Try these ideas:

- By Shape: round, long, spiral, flat
- By Color: white, tan, brown, pink, multicolored
- By Size: tiny, small, medium, large
- By Texture: smooth, bumpy, rough, slippery
- By Type: shells, stones, plants, manmade objects

Challenge: How many different sorting patterns can you make? Which one is your favorite?

### 4. Observe like a scientist:

- What do you notice about each group?
- Are there any patterns or surprises?
- Which items seem to belong together — and which don't?

## Science Connection:

Scientists use classification to study living and nonliving things. Sorting helps us see relationships in nature — just like marine biologists group shells or seaweeds by shape and structure.

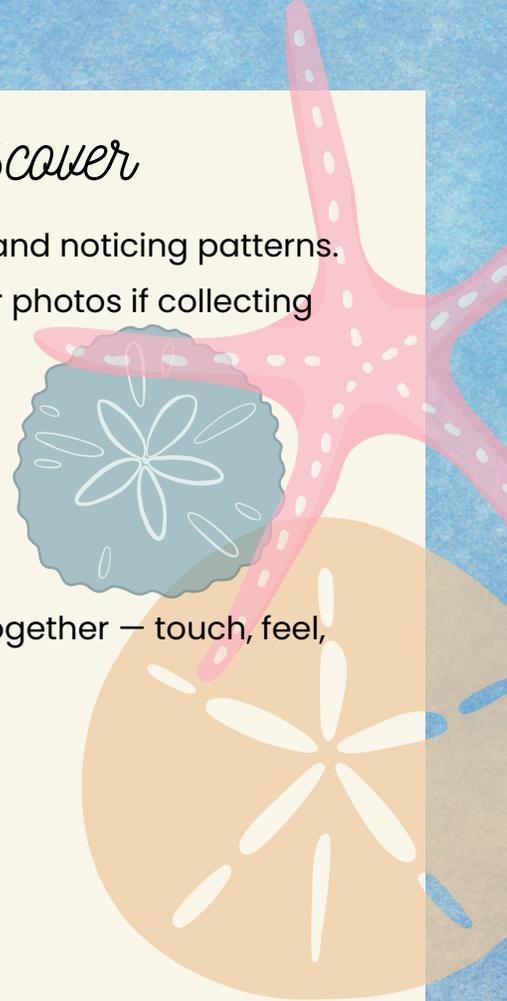
## Extension Ideas:

- Make a “Beach Collection Display” at home using a small box, egg carton, or tray. Label each section with a sorting word (color, texture, etc.).
- On your next trip, see if you can find items that fit a new category.

## Parent Resources: Getting Started with Nature Journaling

If you want inspiration for simple, hands-on sorting and nature play, check out:

- The Nature Science Toolkit (The Inner Naturalist) — [theinnernaturalist.com](http://theinnernaturalist.com)
- Book: Nature Anatomy by Julia Rothman
- Online Resource: Project Learning Tree — Family Activities ([plt.org/resources/activities-for-families/](http://plt.org/resources/activities-for-families/))



# Sound of the Sea: Listening Walk & Sound Map

**Goal:** Practice careful listening and explore how different places have their own unique “soundscapes”.

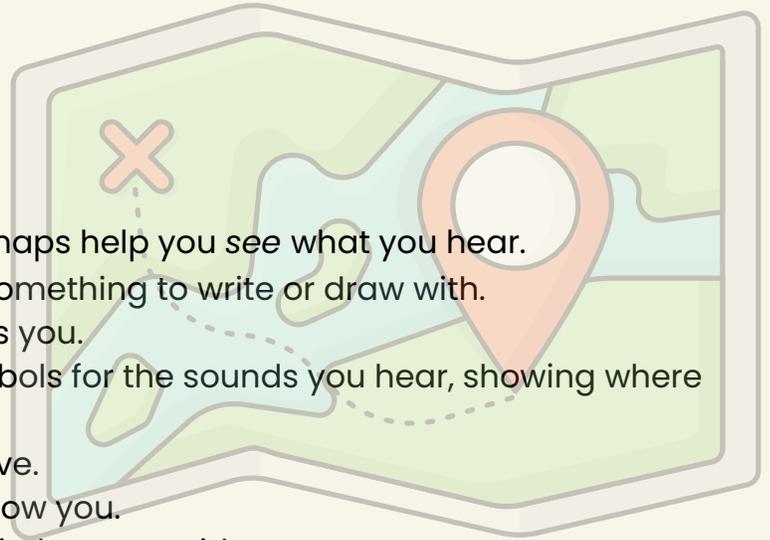
**Where:** At the beach - or anywhere outdoors!

## What to do:

1. Find a comfortable spot to sit or stand quietly.
  - Close your eyes for a moment and take a deep breath.
  - What do you hear? Waves? Birds? Footsteps? The wind?
2. Listen for two minutes.
  - No talking! Just notice the variety of sounds around you – loud and soft, near and far, natural and human-made.
3. After listening, talk together:
  - Which sounds were closest?
  - Which were far away?
  - Did any surprise you?

**Extension: Create a Sound Map:** Sound maps help you see what you hear.

1. Give everyone a piece of paper and something to write or draw with.
2. Draw a small “X” in the middle – that’s you.
3. As you listen again, draw or write symbols for the sounds you hear, showing where they seem to come from.
  - A seagull might be drawn high above.
  - The waves might be a wavy line below you.
  - A person talking might be a small circle to one side.
4. Label or color your sounds if you’d like.
5. Compare your family’s maps – everyone’s will look a little different!



## Compare Environments:

Try making sound maps at the beach, a park, and your backyard.

Ask:

- What sounds are the same?
- What sounds are unique to each place?
- Which environment feels the quietest? The busiest?

## Science Connection:

Scientists use soundscape ecology to study how natural and human sounds interact in different environments. Listening carefully helps us understand ecosystems – and how they change over time.

## Parent Resources: Learn More About Sound Mapping

Help your family explore the world through listening and sound:

The Inner Naturalist – “Sound Mapping for Families” [theinnernaturalist.com](http://theinnernaturalist.com)

Book: The Listening Walk by Paul Showers (HarperCollins)

Online Resource: Soundscape Ecology (Purdue University)

<https://www.soundscapes.org>

# Beach Read-Aloud & Discovery

**Goal:** Encourage imagination, reading, and family connection through beach-themed storytelling and play.

**Where:** At home, in the backyard, or at your favorite beach spot.

## Create Your Own “Beach Day” at Home

Bring the ocean to your living room or backyard with a cozy beach playscape!

### What You’ll Need:

- A beach towel or blanket
- A few favorite stuffed animals or beach toys
- A bowl or tray with sand, shells, or small rocks
- Optional: play ocean sounds or gentle waves in the background

### Set the Scene:

Spread out your towel, gather your family, and pretend you’re sitting by the shore. Encourage kids to describe what they imagine they see, hear, and feel – “Can you hear the seagulls? Feel the breeze?”

### Read Together

Choose a beach- or ocean-themed book to read aloud. A few favorites include:

- *Flotsam* by David Wiesner
- *The Seashore Book* by Charlotte Zolotow
- *Hello Lighthouse* by Sophie Blackall
- *A House for Hermit Crab* by Eric Carle

As you read, pause and ask:

- What do you notice about the beach in the story?
- What is real, and what might be imaginary?
- Which animal or object from the story would you most like to find?

### Science Connection

Stories can help us understand real coastal environments!

Scientists and writers both use observation – they look closely, describe what they see, and ask questions. Reading about the beach helps families notice real-world details like tides, habitats, and ocean life.

### Extension Ideas

- Story-to-Science: After reading, visit the beach or park and look for something from the story – a shell, crab, feather, or tidepool pattern.
- Create a Beach Journal Page: Draw your favorite part of the story and write a few sentences about what you’d like to discover next time you explore outdoors.
- Backyard Beach Storytime: Bring your towel, a book, and a snack outside. Listen for nature sounds and imagine you’re on a coastal adventure.

### Parent Resources: Beach Playscapes & Storytime Ideas

Make storytime more engaging with simple at-home setups and outdoor storytelling ideas:

- The Inner Naturalist – Family Playscapes – [theinnernaturalist.com](http://theinnernaturalist.com)
- Online Resource: PBS Parents – DIY Storytime Spaces – <https://www.pbs.org/parents>
  - Includes creative guides to building cozy, themed reading spaces using household items.

# Mini Beach Lab: Sink or Float

**Goal:** Explore why some things float while others sink – and discover how floating items can travel across the ocean to our beaches.

**Where:** At home, in the backyard, or at the beach.

## Create Your Own “Beach Day” at Home

### What You’ll Need:

- A large clear tub or bucket filled with water
- Optional: table salt (to make salt water)
- Small items to test: shells, pebbles, driftwood, plastic bottle caps, seaweed, sticks, or other small beach treasures



### What to Do:

1. Predict: Before testing, guess which objects will sink and which will float.
- Ask: What do you think will happen – and why?
2. Test Each Item: Drop one object at a time into the water.
- Watch what happens – does it float on top or sink to the bottom?
3. Record Your Results: Make a simple chart or sort your objects into two groups: Floaters and Sinkers.
4. Compare:
  - What do the floating items have in common?
  - Which items are heavier or lighter?
  - What surprised you?

### Science Connection:

Objects that float are less dense than water. In the ocean, lightweight items – like plastic or driftwood – can travel long distances, pushed by currents and wind.

### Extension: Ocean Currents & Our Beach

The items that float can wash up on our beaches from hundreds (or even thousands) of miles away!

Ocean currents move water – and floating debris – around the world in giant loops. Along the Texas coast, one of the most important is the Gulf Loop Current – a warm ocean current that moves water from the Caribbean, through the Gulf of Mexico, and out into the Atlantic Ocean.

Try This:

- Look up a current map online with your family.
- Talk about where floating objects found on your beach might have come from.
- Compare with what you found in your Sink or Float test – which items could travel the farthest?

### Parent & Family Resources: Learn More About Ocean Currents

Explore real-time maps, ocean science tools, and educational resources:

- NOAA Ocean Currents Explorer – <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov>
- National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) – <https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs>
- Family-friendly coastal science resources and interactive estuary lessons.