

Activity: Nature Goal: Cognitive/Intellectual Populations: Children

TH Activity Plan –Insects & Other Crawly Friends Sleuth Room

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants explore a nature-themed sleuth room searching for answers related to bugs & insects.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Expand knowledge of insects, horticulture & the natural world; practice reading skills, strengthen reasoning skills

Physical: Strengthen hand skills & writing skills

Psychological/Emotional: Strengthen problem-solving skills; expand confidence in solving puzzles

Sensory: Use sensory skills to view, touch & smell items that are part of the session

Social: Strengthen team building skills; strengthen communication skills

Materials

Insects (some live in jars or insect boxes, some plastic models), tools, laminated pages with info

Clipboards, pencils, magnifying glasses, lock box, a 5 number lock, small prizes (spider rings, erasers, pencils, etc.)

Clues, facilitator script, signs

Alternate/Waiting activity: paper, pencils, markers, cardboard insect templates, stapler, [printed jokes](#), scissors

Wipes

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Set up nature-themed sleuth room in a gazebo, classroom or garden.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing the sleuth room, going over rules & time limits. Clipboards are passed out & first group begins.
3. Facilitator begins each group with instructions (see below). The 5 stations are set-up throughout the room with the associated clues, props & insects. For example, use a plastic/paper mâché spider & spider pictures. Halloween items or online insect models are available. These should be based on maturity, academic level & science knowledge of participants.
4. At each station, identify the insect, find the number clue, write it down & when group has all 5 clues, move to the treasure box, unlock it & take a prize.
5. Other groups can be involved in another activity as they await their turn. Ideas: Trace insect templates, make insect jokebooks.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: The Insects and Other Crawly Friends Sleuth Room was delivered to children 5-8 years old. It can be adapted to other ages and abilities and was fun for parent-child interactions. Small groups are recommended.

This TH activity can use a number of themes to address therapeutic goals. For example, a suicide prevention program used Tom Hanks themed Cast Away to address being alone where the basketball Wilson meant the character was not alone. What plant or nature-themed applications might work for other populations?

This is what the host will read to the escapees

You are asked to unlock the treasure box. You don't have the combination, but your insect and crawly friends do. Each bug friend has one number to the combination. Follow the stations in their order to find your 5 crawly friends and numbers to open the treasure box.
(the clue could be a picture or model of the bug)

Station 1: I am not technically considered an insect but an arachnid & am related to Charlotte & live in a web (Spider).

The first combination number is the same as the number of legs on this arachnid. **Answer 8**

Fun Fact: There are 40,000 species of spiders & all make webs of silk.

Station 2: I share a name with a fire-breathing beast that can fly (Dragonfly).

The second combination number is the same as the number of eyes that I have. **Answer 4**

Fun fact: Two of the dragonfly eyes are compound eyes with thousands of lenses giving them a 360 view.

Station 3: I am not invited to picnics but I come anyway (Ants).

The third number is the number of main body parts most insects including ants have. **Answer 3**

Fun Fact: Ants have two stomachs & were around with the dinosaurs, but almost all insects have head, thorax, & abdomen.

Station 4: When you think of me, you probably think of black with red spots but I can be yellow, or pink and have stripes (Ladybug).

The fourth number is the number of antennae most insects have. **Answer 2**

Fun Fact: Ladybugs can squeeze stinky liquid from their knees to get away from enemies.

Station 5: This insect's main job is to eat, & eat a lot before entering their cocoon also known as a chrysalis, before emerging as a butterfly (Caterpillar).

The fifth number is the same as the third combination number.

Fun Fact: Caterpillars have 4000 muscles, almost six times the number of muscles in humans.

You now have all the numbers, so go & open the treasure box & claim your prize!

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.

No sharp, small or toxic items should be used, especially if young children or others who may be tempted to put items into mouth will be participating.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Many plant or nature themes would be appropriate for this TH activity including plant identification, birds, and seashells. This activity could be done after a lesson on any of these, reinforcing knowledge acquisition. Adaptations can be made according to intellectual skills, grade level and maturity.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

The Nature Institute. (2025). [Childrens outdoor escape room](https://www.thenatureinstitute.org/childrens-outdoor-escape-room/). [Thenatureinstitute.org](https://www.thenatureinstitute.org/).

WilliamD. (2025). [Adventure-themed escape room 'in the outdoors'](https://www.instructables.com/Adventure-themed-escape-room-in-the-outdoors/). [Instructables.com](https://www.instructables.com/).

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2025.

TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2024.