

TH Activity Plan – Nature Bingo

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Graphics by Fairfax County Park Authority

Based on Fairfax County Park Authority's Nature Bingo.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/virtual/nature-bingo.pdf>



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants play a game of nature bingo.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Strengthen attention; follow instructions

Physical: Practice listening skills; practice visual scanning

Psychological/Emotional: Practice behavior associated with winning & losing games; practice reading emotional cues from others

Sensory: Integrate mind-body actions; address sensory defensiveness by handling nature's items

Social: Play a game cooperatively with others; follow rules demonstrating fair play

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Print bingo cards or materials to make bingo cards. A master list/chit, one for each item is gathered in a bag or box. Actual items from nature can be available for participants to look & touch (bird's nest, leaves, flowers).
2. Facilitator begins session by distributing nature bingo cards, or having participants distribute these to others in the group. Pulling a master chit from their bag, the group practices listening, & visually scanning for items on their card before game actually begins. Rules of play, & suggestions for appropriate behavior are presented appropriate for age, maturity & cognitive abilities. Facilitator demonstrates how to mark card if the item is called on a participant's card (marker, chit, small pebble).
3. Play begins with master list/chit pulled from bag. Participants may be given chance to do this task (as a prize for winning, to demonstrate fair play etc.).
4. Depending on time in the session, several games may be played. Discussion of emotional response to winning & losing, self-regulating emotions in competitive situations, playing fairly & cooperatively should be included in session.
5. Optional: Prizes for winning. These might include fruit, stickers or other.

Materials

Nature bingo cards, master list/chit for each item, plastic sleeves (optional), chits for marking called items or dry erase markers

Optional for making bingo cards: pre-printed nature items, scissors, glue, prizes

Wipes, paper towels

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Nature bingo can be utilized for TH sessions and can be adapted to all levels of cognitive, emotional and physical functioning. In each of these health domains, the therapeutic focus can address a variety of challenges. Therapeutic focus on cognitive functions can include following instructions, strengthening attention, sequencing hearing-vision-hand movement when the nature item is called out in the game. Visual scanning can also be a physical domain focus that may be important for populations including

children and their developmental skills maturation, people recovering from stroke or surgery, people with intellectual disadvantages, and neurodivergent individuals.

The primary therapeutic focus, which can be combined with other therapeutic goals, is in the social health domain. Playing a game cooperatively with others, following rules practicing socially acceptable behavior related to fair play, and practicing being gracious in defeat are all important social skills that will be used across the lifespan. Using a game can guide behavior/competitiveness that is not too aggressive while supporting self-regulation, model social rules, written and unwritten, and support people whose skills in this area cause weak social interactions and relationships.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Use of scissors or small chits may not be appropriate for some individuals or populations.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Nature bingo cards can be created in a previous session or in this session. Pre-printed squares of nature bingo items can be cut and pasted onto cards by participants, with a therapeutic focus on following instructions, developing fine motor skills, strengthening pincer grip handling chits, and helping others with a [service project where game cards are created](#) for use by others. [Teachers Pay Teachers website offers free downloadable nature cards](#). Various themes with nature include scavenger hunt, nature hike, nature adventures with a Ninja vocabulary cards, and Earth Day bingo. [Nature Conservancy Canada](#) also offers nature bingo card templates with themes of pollinator habitat, roadside scavenger hunt, summer and winter scavenger hunts.

Nature items can include pictures of rocks, pinecones, birds, animal tracks, worms, butterflies, leaves in various shapes and colors, among other symbols. Having live samples of some of the nature items can provide sensory exploration, environmental education and added interest for most groups.

Other nature bingo ideas – print one large card and play as a group with a focus on collaboration and cooperation. Use teams or pairs for playing the game. Use laminated boards/cards that can be taken outside or used inside; use small stones to cover the space when item is found or called. Alternately, use stickers or dry erase makers. For more mobile participants, collect items that are found in nature, placing in a large bag, attaching the bingo board to the bag along with markers to cross items as they are found. Take all the items found and create a nature mandala the same day or in another session.

The nature bingo idea and link were identified in the Mid Atlantic Horticultural Therapy Network (MAHTN) June 2025 newsletter.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Fairfax County Park Authority. (n.d.). [Nature bingo \[cards\]](#). [Fairfax County.gov/parks/sites](#).

Fleming, L, & Bethel, M. (2024). [TH activity plan – Service project: Making plant photo game cards](#). University of Florida Therapeutic Horticulture Activities Database.

Nature Conservancy Canada. (n.d.). [Nature bingo](#). [Nature Conservancy.ca](#).

Teachers Pay Teachers. (2025). [Nature bingo for classroom](#). [Teachers Pay Teachers.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 2025.