



Title: Touch/Smell/Taste Test

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Theme: All five human senses are important in observing nature.

Objectives:

- Students will use senses other than sight to observe natural objects.
- Students will become familiar with differences and similarities between natural objects.

Duration: 10-30 minutes

Age Range: Kindergarten-6th Grade

Materials:

- 3-5 cloth bags
- 3-5 natural objects to feel (shells, fur, feathers, etc.)
- 3-5 small, opaque containers (film canisters work well)
- 3-5 natural objects to smell (spruce needles, soil, algae etc.)
- Blindfolds (1 per student)
- 3-5 natural objects to taste (mint, spruce needles, berries, etc.)

Background:

This activity is meant to foster sensory exploration in a classroom environment when outside exploration is not possible. It works well in conjunction with outdoor activities.

Preparation:

Place one “feely object” in each of the cloth bags. Place one “smelly object” in each of the opaque containers. Keep the “tasty objects” hidden for now. Check student allergies to make sure that the “tasty objects” are okay for the students to consume.

Introduction:

Tell the story of the elephant in the dark, based on an ancient Indian parable and widely adapted throughout the world. An elephant was brought into a dark room and a group of people that had never seen or experienced an elephant before were brought in to describe it. The person who touched the elephant’s tail described the creature as a rope. The person who touched the elephant’s leg said it was like a

pillar. The one who touched the trunk described a tree branch. The one who felt the elephant's ear thought of it as a fan, and the one who touched the tusk described the elephant as a water pipe. Explain how everyone will have a different understanding of an object depending on his or her own observations, and that it is important to use many senses when exploring nature. The more senses a person uses, the more they will discover in the natural world.

Activities & Procedures:

Begin with the feely bags. Have all students sit in a circle. Before you pass around the first bag, ask students to use their sense of touch to observe the object in the bag. They should not look into the bag, and should keep their observations to themselves rather than saying anything out loud as the bag goes around. Once the bag has been passed completely around the circle, ask the students to describe – not identify – the feel of the object with one word. Students can share their descriptive words one at a time or everyone can say it at the same time. Reveal the object to the group and pass it around. Ask students if it feels different once they can see it. Pass around the remaining 2-4 bags.

Move on to the smellies. Have students sit or stand in a circle. Remind students not to look in the canisters (you may want to poke holes in the tops so you can leave them on and reduce the temptation to peek) and to make their observations silently. Pass the first smelly around. Once it has gone all the way around the circle, have students share a descriptive word about the smell. Reveal the object to the world and pass it around. Ask students if it smells different now that they can feel and see it. Pass around the remaining 2-4 smellies.

End with the taste test. Have students wash their hands. Sit in a circle. Explain that they do not have to taste anything that they don't want to, but that everything is safe to eat. Have each student put on a blindfold. Give each student a sample of the first food to taste; ask them to think, without speaking, of a word to describe the taste of the food. Then have the group share their descriptions. Tell the students what the food is. Continue with 2-4 more things to taste.

Wrap-up:

Asks students if they were surprised by the taste, smell, or feel of anything. Remind them how important it is to use all of their senses when observing the natural world. Give examples of how senses are important to understanding the whole picture – the sound of birds calling, the smell of sap from a freshly cut tree, the feel of spongy ground beneath your feet.

If you would like to include sensory exploration of hearing, ask students to construct a "sound map." This activity works best outdoors, but can be conducted in a classroom as well. Spread students out as much as feasible and have them sit quietly with an index card and pencil. Instruct students to put an "x" in the middle

of the card to represent themselves and mark the sounds they hear on their map over the next 2-3 minutes. Each student should use their own symbols (exclamation point, bird, star, etc.) to mark the sounds on the map, arranged around the "x" based on the location of the sound relative to the student. If a similar sound is heard from different directions, the student should use the same symbol in both locations. Ask students to share their sound maps at the end.

Evaluation:

Use student sensory observations as a formative assessment. Note student behavior during the activity to assess their following of directions.

Sense Test Standards

Science As Inquiry and Process: Students develop an understanding of the processes and applications of scientific inquiry.

SA1

Students develop an understanding of the processes of science used to investigate problems, design and conduct repeatable scientific investigations, and defend scientific arguments

The student demonstrates an understanding of the processes of science by:

[3] SA1.2 observing and describing the student's own world to answer simple questions

SA2

Students develop an understanding that the processes of science require integrity, logical reasoning, skepticism, openness, communication, and peer review.

The student demonstrates an understanding of the attitudes and approaches to scientific inquiry by:

[3] SA2.1 answering "how do you know?" questions with reasonable answers