

## Silent Hike or Sit Spot

---

It is rare that we experience quiet in our daily lives. Being quiet in nature allows for self reflection and a deeper connection to nature, as we experience aspects of the environment we would not have noticed otherwise.

**GRADES:** 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

**INTENDED OUTCOMES:** Feet

**SUGGESTED SUPPLIES:**

- Pen, paper, clip board (optional)
- Something to sit on (optional)

**STEPS - SIT SPOTS (all ages):**

- Scout your location ahead of time. Look for a place that is far from cars and busy roads. Think about comfort – shady places are nice to sit in. Being by water adds nice sounds and something to look at while students sit.
- Set the ground rules before you go to the space. Are you going to walk over silently? How will you let them know when it is okay to talk again? What should they do if they need to get your attention? Is it okay to motion, gesture, or otherwise interact with the other students around them during silent time?
- If it is helpful, you can give students a prompt to think about or write about. You can ask them to make observations about what they see, hear, smell, and touch. They can use the time to journal or simply to sit – not having an activity to do can be a positive challenge for students to work through.
- Once you walk them to the area you have chosen you can pick spots within that space for them, or let them pick their own. You may want to give them guidelines for how much space they should leave between themselves and other students.
- Let them sit in silence for 5 to 10 minutes. You can always adjust if you see them getting antsy – or doing well. Try to get them to work up to longer amounts of time throughout the year.
- When you are done, collect them back together. Take time to debrief the experience, as a group, in pairs, or in their journals. If there was a prompt, how did they answer it? What did they notice about the environment and/or themselves?

**STEPS - SILENT HIKES:**

- Scout your location ahead of time. How far do you want to walk? Can you find a shady trail or path away from the sounds of cars?
- Set the ground rules before you begin. Are you going to start being silent immediately, or once you reach a certain location? How will you let them know when it is okay to talk again? What should they do if they need to get your attention? Is it okay to motion, gesture, or otherwise interact with the other students around them during silent time? Should they leave a certain

amount of distance between themselves as they walk, as to let each other have their own experience?

- If it is helpful, you can give students a prompt to think about as they walk. They can make observations about what they see, hear, smell, and touch or can use the time to reflect on a question of personal significance.
- Spend at 5 to 10 minutes walking silently if you can. You can always adjust the time if you see them getting antsy – or doing well. Try to get them to work up to longer amounts of time throughout the year.
- When you are done, collect them back together. Take time to debrief the experience, as a group, in pairs, or in their journals. If there was a prompt, how did they answer it? What did they notice about the environment and/or themselves?



### **TIPS AND TRICKS**

- Build this into your daily or weekly routine with students. Taking time to rest in nature can lower stress and improve focus. You can also use this to create space for students to process transitions (i.e. coming up on the end of the year) or to give space for processing difficult moments (i.e. the death of a class pet, a troubling news event, etc..)
- Try introducing the idea of a silence and close listening with a game that requires close attention to sound. For example, ask one student to sit in the center of a circle with their eyes closed or blindfolded. Put a small object in the circle near them. The goal is for the other students to try to sneak into the circle and grab the object without being noticed by the student in the center. If the center student hears someone coming they can point in the direction of the noise. If they point correctly (there was a student in that direction trying to grab the object) than the student doing the “stealing” has to sit down again. A student “wins” if they manage to grab the object and get it back to the outside of the circle without being caught.
- For more advanced groups, try enhancing the experience by turning the quiet hike into a solo hike. This is best with two adults – one who goes ahead of the group and one who sends the students to follow one by one, allowing adequate space between them, as to give them their own experience. The second adult can then follow. You can lay down cards with facts or sayings on them along the way to provide food for thought and comforting signs that students are going the right way (if they are very spread out on the trail).



### **Relevant Standards**

n/a