

DECOMPOSITION MODELING

Create a visual representation of what happens to plants after they die.

DETAILS

- Age: Can be adapted for any age
- Time: 20 - 60 minutes
- Materials: (optional) paper and pencil

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

When choosing a place to explore, please be mindful of the CDC's recommended social distancing protocols.

POSSIBLE MODELS

- A line of oldest - youngest leaves
- A circle showing a cycle
- Piles of leaves organized by age
- Organize leaves by species and/or age
- Organize based on where they were found

RECORD OBSERVATIONS

If you have a journal, you might try recording your model in the journal. Recording information helps us remember it better and make better observations.

OBJECTIVES

- CREATE and USE a model to explain decomposition to MAKE PREDICTIONS
- EXPLORE and OBSERVE an outdoor space

ACTIVITY STEPS

EXPLORATION & LEAF COLLECTION

 Head to an outdoor space and spend a few minutes looking closely at what's on the ground. Ask yourself and your student questions like.

- What do you notice?
- Can you see any patterns?
- Where did these leaves/sticks come from?

 Begin collecting leaves and sorting them. Make four separate piles of leaves of the following estimated ages:

- 1 week old
- 3 - 5 months old
- 1 - 3 years old
- 5+ years old

 Organize your leaves and make observations! There is no one right way to organize them. If you need inspiration, see the sidebar.

USE THE MODEL

 Once you've completed the model and sketch, consider how other leaves/sticks might fit into this model. Can you determine how long a leaf has been on the ground based on your model? What other information would you need?

 Consider doing the same exercise in a different area. Record the different environmental factors (sunlight, moisture, slope, public area vs private, amount/species of trees around, etc.)