

# 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.)