

ECOSYSTEMS

Field Trip: Observation grid
Francesca Costa



Name:
Group:
Date:
Time:

Cleanliness

- 1 Is there any litter left around?
a no
b some
c a large amount
- 2 Have litter bins been provided?
a yes
b no
- 3 Is there any animal excrement?
a no
b some
c a large amount

Structures

- 4 Is there any seating e.g. park benches?
a no
b some seating
c a lot of seating
- 5 Is there any playground equipment for children e.g. swings, a see-saw?
a no
b some equipment
c a lot of equipment

If you have answered 'b' or 'c' describe the type of playground equipment you see:
There is / are
.....
.....

- 6 Is there a lake, a pond or a fountain?
a yes
b no

If you have answered 'a' describe what you see:
There is / are
.....
.....



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Signage

- 7 Are there any signs that explain the various types of plants?
 - a yes
 - b no

If you have answered 'a' what types of plants are there?

There is / are
.....
.....

- 8 Are there any signs that indicate what activities are forbidden?
 - a yes
 - b no

If you have answered 'a' what activities are forbidden?

.....
.....
.....

Access to the area

- 9 Are there any roads or paths inside the area?
 - a yes
 - b no

- 10 Can you reach the area using public transport?
 - a yes
 - b no

- 11 Are there any bicycles?
 - a yes
 - b no
 Noise:

- 12 Can you hear any sounds from nature e.g. birds, insects?
 - a yes
 - b no

If you have answered 'a' what sounds from nature can you hear?

.....
.....
.....

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13 Can you hear any man-made sounds? Tick the sounds that you hear:

- traffic
- car horns
- airplanes
- stereos
- machinery
- people
- other – please specify:

Security

14 Are dogs allowed? If you can see any dogs, are they on a lead?

- a yes
- b no
- c not applicable

15 Can you see any evidence of vandalism?

- a yes
- b no

16 Is the area closed at night?

- a yes
- b no
- c we don't know / can't tell

Field Trip: Useful language for writing a report

Francesca Costa

To describe your observations you can use the past simple.

Sentence starters

We observed...

We saw...

We noticed...

When you are describing scientific evidence you should use either the present simple or the past simple.

Making statements based on evidence

In the park there is no evidence of vandalism.

OR

We saw no evidence of vandalism in the park.

When describing an observation you can also use the passive voice because it will make your language sound more scientific.

Making scientific observations

Photographs were taken at the park.

The noise of traffic was heard in the background

This is a language sequence of how you could describe your observations:

Structuring the report

The purpose of this field trip was to observe / to determine...

We used... / We saw... / We observed that...

First...

Then...

Finally...

Our observations indicate that...

Overview

This project is a field trip to examine a local ecosystem. You need to select in advance a green area that qualifies as an ecosystem and organize transport to and from this area. A safe local park is ideal.

This activity works best with small classes after the students have been introduced to the concept of ecosystems and the biotic and abiotic factors that affect them.

Learning objectives

- to consolidate the concept of ecosystems and how human beings can affect them
- to practice observing and interpreting information
- to encourage students to co-operate effectively in groups and make empirical observations
- to consolidate or revise ecosystems vocabulary and vocabulary related to green areas of the town/city

Materials

- maps of the area and observation grids for each student
- highlighters or coloured pencils for each group of students
- Ecosystems Field Trip wordlist
- digital cameras (optional)

Procedure

- Tell students that they are going to explore an ecosystem near their school and make observations on it. Check with students that they know what an ecosystem is. Ask the class to suggest examples of ecosystems that they know e.g. desert ecosystems, marine ecosystems.

ecosystem [ˈi:kəʊsɪstəm] noun [C]
 all the plants, animals, and other organisms in a particular area, considered in relation to the environment that they live in and the way they all depend on each other: *a desert ecosystem.*

- Tell students that ecosystems are all around us – even in big towns and cities you can find small ecosystems. A park, for example, is an ecosystem. All ecosystems are affected by humans.
- Before you make the visit, split the students into groups of 3 or 4. Give every student an observation grid and a wordlist. Familiarize the students with the vocabulary used in the observation grid e.g. litter, seating. Key vocabulary is listed in the wordlist. Ask students to refer to this list for words they don't know. Students can use the wordlist to write translations in their native language or draw pictures to represent unfamiliar words.
- When you arrive at the park give each group a copy of the map and ask them to mark the park (or green area) on it with a highlighter or coloured pencil.

Ecosystems Field Trip
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- Ask students to discuss their first impressions of the area in their groups. Students should answer the following questions:
 - Is this area a good place for people to live? Why, why not?
 - How is the park maintained?
 - Who do you think goes to the park?
- Supervise the groups of students on a tour of the park as they complete their observation grids. If students have brought digital cameras they can take pictures of plants, animals, etc. Questions on the observation grid are based on several factors: the cleanliness of the park, its structures (e.g. park benches, litter bins), signage, accessibility, noise and security.
- When students return to the classroom ask them to write up a report based on their findings from the field trip. They can use the Useful Language sheet to help them structure their writing.
- Students could also make an ecosystems poster based on their observations from the field trip. The poster should be labelled in English. They could then present their findings to the class.