



# How to...

## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2023, 20% of people in the US went hiking, making it the nation's most popular outdoor activity.



# Get closer to nature

Take advantage of fall weather — and boost your mood — by heading outside.

Autumn is a special time to enjoy the outdoors, when the weather is cool and crisp for absorbing the sights and sounds of nature. Research shows that spending time in a natural setting has many benefits—it can help reduce anxiety and stress, improve concentration and attention, and even lead to better sleep. Here are some ways to get started.

### Go for a walk, bike, or hike

The easiest way to get closer to nature is to simply step outside. Gather family or friends and go for a walk or bike ride in your neighborhood or a local park. Besides getting exercise, you'll be stimulating your senses, from seeing a variety of colors in autumn leaves to feeling a breeze blow through the trees. With an adult's help, you can search for free guided hikes from a state park or local nature center. With the days growing shorter, some may offer "night hikes" in late afternoon, when you can spot stars in the sky or hear the sounds of owls, frogs, and other nocturnal animals.

### Try birdwatching

November is a great time of year for birdwatching. It's when many bird species take flight on their migratory

journeys to warm destinations to the south. You can visit a bird sanctuary in your area or learn more about the birds in your neighborhood. The Merlin Bird ID app is a free bird guide with photos, bird sounds, and maps that can help you identify the bird species you hear or see.

### Plant a fall garden

Fall is a good time to plant because it's less hot for plants but the soil is still warm. In parts of the US where the weather is milder, you may be able to plant leafy crops like spinach, broccoli, and kale through December. Speak with your local plant nursery about what you can plant at this time of year in your area. You can also bring nature inside by having potted plants in your home.



Walk with a friend.

### Protect nature

Another way to get closer to nature is to show that you care for the environment with the choices you make. Small actions—such as recycling your family's cardboard boxes or walking to nearby destinations instead of catching a ride in a car—help reduce waste and pollution. You could also approach leaders at your school or local government about organizing a community cleanup to keep the outdoors beautiful for everyone.

## Snacks for a hike



If you're going on a hike, bring plenty of water and a nutritious snack. Here are three ideas.

**Trail mix** You can buy trail mix at the store or make your own by combining foods such as dried fruit, nuts, cereal, and small chocolate pieces. Pack your mix in a reusable container or bag.

**Muffins** Homemade or store-bought muffins keep well on a hike. To make a muffin more filling, you could cut it in half and spread nut butter on it.

**Fresh fruit** Choose fruit that you can eat whole without having to cut it, and wash it before you go. Good picks include apples, bananas, and oranges.