

Scientific Observation and Journaling for Grades K–1

Lesson 1: Simple Leaf



Teacher Preparation Bring leaves to class, one for each student, or take students outdoors to pick them. All leaves should come from the same kind of tree or bush. Store them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator until you're ready to use them. **Optional:** cut a branch to show your students how leaves are arranged.

Materials For each student, one leaf, pencil, science journal, one crayon (optional)

Time One class period

Procedure

1. **What do we know about leaves?** Draw a web on your board. Ask students to share what they know about leaves as you record answers.
2. Pass out science journals and leaves
3. Students **observe** and you **write lists of descriptive words and numbers** on the board. Ask guiding questions to inspire lists: *What shape and color is your leaf? What does it smell like? What sound does it make when you drop it? How does it feel to your fingertip (rough, smooth, bumpy)? How many stems, notches, veins, spots does it have? How many colors?* Then **students write** lists in their journals.
4. **Demonstrate scientific drawing** (see teacher's guide). **Students then draw** their leaves, paying careful attention to the shape, stem, and veins. **Optional:** on unlined paper, have students trace leaves or make a rubbing (place leaf under paper and rub top of paper with a crayon). *Are you looking closely before you draw? Keep looking and draw what you see. Have you drawn the stem and the veins?* **Optional:** With first graders, try enlarging drawings while keeping them to scale (bigger but the same shape).
5. **Demonstrate labeling.** Draw lines between words and parts: *stem, vein, edge.* **Students then label** their drawings.
6. **Reflect on observations.** Practice making **analogies.** *What does your leaf look like? What does it remind you of?* Write a list of answers on your board and then a sentence or two: "The shape of the leaf reminds me of ____." "The design on the leaf looks like ____." Students **write a sentence** in their journals. **Optional:** With kindergarten students, try one simple sentence, "It is like a ____."
7. **Close with a quick class discussion.** *What did you like about this activity? What did you learn? Was anything difficult or confusing?* **Optional:** First-graders may add a sentence or two to their reflections. "I liked ____."
8. Clean-up by collecting leaves to compost.