

Nature photography

Topic

Exploring nature with a camera

Aims

- Raise awareness of the nature around us, encouraging students to explore and appreciate outdoor life
- Extend students' vocabulary to talk about nature
- Develop students' note-taking skills
- Develop students' oral fluency through a discussion of photos

Age/level

Teenagers (CEFR level B1 and above)

Time

45–60 minutes

Materials

- Before the lesson, find four images of photos of nature. Free images with a Creative Commons licence can be found on: <https://unsplash.com/search/photos/natural>. (Note: choose photos that reflect the students' reality. If your students live in an urban area, choose photos of nature in city locations, such as a park, a garden, a pond, or even a weed appearing from the pavement.)
- Student worksheet
- Camera/mobile phone, a pen and a notebook

Introduction

This lesson was written to celebrate Nature Photography Day on 15 June, but can be used at any time of the year.

Focusing on speaking, vocabulary and writing, the lesson aims to enable students to describe what they see, hear, feel and smell in a natural setting. The lesson begins by showing students some photos of nature and asking them to brainstorm words they associate with each photo. They then learn some vocabulary to describe nature in more detail (using the five senses). Students then go out and explore a natural place, making notes and taking photos of any nature that interests them. Finally, they share their photos with their classmates, describing their experiences and using the vocabulary as appropriate.

Nature photography brings us closer to the world we live in, and the view through the camera's lens helps us see it in a different way. Nature Photography Day is a good excuse to get out into the world, get some exercise and take a closer look at nature, and then capture it for the memories.

Procedure

1. Lead-in (5–10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If relevant, introduce Nature Photography Day. Explain that this special day was established by nature photographers who wanted to raise awareness of the beauty of nature, to protect it and to ensure that land is used for nature as well as building. • Ask students to discuss the questions: What kinds of nature photos do you enjoy looking at? Have you ever enjoyed a photo of a leafy tree? Or a shot of a bee landing on a flower? A cloud drifting in the sky? What kinds of nature photos do you enjoy taking? • Write the well-known expression on the board: 'A picture speaks a thousand words.' • Show four photos of nature (chosen before the lesson) and ask students to work in pairs, brainstorming six to ten words they associate with each photo. Make a mental note of words they want to express in English but have difficulty with.
2. Vocabulary (15 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give out the worksheet and ask students to work together to categorise the words under the four headings given. Students might need to use dictionaries. • This is a relatively subjective task, but suggested answers are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A: LOOKS – dull, bright, misty, vivid, faint, shallow - B: SOUNDS – gentle, humming, raucous, monotonous, lively, dripping - C: FEELS – rough, smooth, sharp, crisp, calm, gentle - D: SMELLS – sweet, earthy, fresh, faint, fragrant, salty • As you carry out feedback, ask students to explain why they chose to put the words under each heading. Encourage them to add other words they know. • Present any other useful topic-related language that students want to know. <p>(Optional) For additional vocabulary practice, show the four photos you presented at the start of the lesson and have students write a short caption for each one (for example: misty morning, dead leaf floating on a shallow pond, soft red rose petals).</p>
3. Photography outing – during class or for homework (20 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the nature photography project. Tell students to go to a place where there is nature (e.g. a local park or garden). They should explore and enjoy the nature around them. They MUST take notes of things they see/hear/feel/smell in a notebook and take at least six photos of nature on their tour. Read the instructions. • Remind students that nature is everywhere! It is even in a leaf coming out of the pavement. Briefly discuss nearby places where they could take photos of nature.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind them to stay safe. If helpful, elicit ways to stay safe, e.g. go in pairs, choose a place you know, don't touch poisonous objects, avoid deep ponds and lakes.
4. Group discussion (10–15 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students return to class with their photos and their notebooks.• In small groups they show each other their photos and describe the setting, using their notes to help them remember. Encourage students to ask follow-up questions, e.g. what did it smell/sound like? What was the sky like?• To finish, let students make captions for their favourite photos and post them online.

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