

# Faces and Places - Get Out! - Outdoors That Is!

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For many generations, summertime for kids meant spending hours and hours outside - splashing at the local swimming hole, building tree forts, playing ball, riding bikes, attending day camps, chasing fireflies, and more. However, as kids' attention is increasingly captivated by apps and screens, that structured and unstructured outdoor time takes a hit.

Those "good old days" always seem rosy, but is it actually bad for kids to spend less time out-of-doors and in nature? Many professionals argue "yes." Author and journalist Richard Louv firmly believes that children are harmed when they cannot connect with nature and the great outdoors. He coined the term "nature deficit disorder" in his 2005 book entitled *Lost Child in the Woods* and uses it to describe a range of potential negative consequences of children's reduced outdoor time and physical contact with nature, including attention disorders, obesity, reduced creativity, and depression.

For parents and professionals who are interested in ensuring that children retain (or reestablish) a connection to the outdoors, answers are close at hand. Activities to get kids outside can be as simple as going into the backyard to count bugs, taking a walk in your municipal park, or counting stars in the night sky. For a more formal way of promoting youth interaction with nature and the outdoors, the Oregon Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (OCOBOR). OCOBOR lends a framework for programming children's outdoor activities in ten fundamental areas. You can see the ten OCOBOR rights at [www.outdoorseekers.com](http://www.outdoorseekers.com).

While kids sometime need a little prodding to head outside, the [Oregon Recreation and Park Association](http://www.outdoorseekers.com) "[Outdoor Seekers](http://www.outdoorseekers.com)" passport program offers a great incentive to get kids into nature. Based on the 10 rights of the OCOBOR, the Outdoor Seekers helps kids understand and record different kinds of outdoor activities. Once they've engaged in all ten activities, kids can submit their completed passport for a small prize. Perfect for families, camps, or childcare programs, Outdoor Seekers lends a fun framework for kids' play in the outdoors. And the Outdoor Seekers website ([www.outdoorseekers.com](http://www.outdoorseekers.com)) helps adults identify outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that kids can access throughout Oregon.

Take the time to get outside and reframe your worldview in a natural setting. It's good fun, a great learning opportunity, and just might make a huge difference in a child's emotional and physical health!