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Plant, Animal, or Mineral: A (Backyard, Beach, or Estuary) Scavenger Hunt

Objective

This activity helps students better observe and categorize the things they find on a scavenger hunt into different types of matter. You can make your own lab sheet, or use the template attached. After the scavenger hunt, you can add in some math challenges to see which types of matter you found most frequently.

Students will be able to:

1. Create a lab sheet to record data.
2. Identify and describe evidence of various forms of matter as plants, animals, or minerals.
3. Identify and describe characteristics of different forms of matter.
4. Record the evidence on a lab sheet they created.
5. Compare hypothesis to conclusion.

Vocabulary: mass, matter, organic, biotic, abiotic

Materials: Student designed lab sheet (the larger the better), pencils or crayons, some samples to discuss.

Activity Guide:

1. First, what do you know about matter?

Matter is anything that has mass (weight) and takes up space.

What are some examples of matter?

Matter examples: grass, dirt, viruses, air

Not matter: dreams, ideas, laws

Can you always touch matter? Is the moon matter, the sun, space????

2. We are going to have scavenger hunt to explore the organic (living) matter here in your backyard, a nearby park, or stream.
3. We will need to record what we find. We will want to put the names or pictures in spaces on this sheet (or poster) to classify them as: Living (biotic) or Non-living (abiotic), and either plant, animal, or mineral.
4. We'll also draw a diagram of the things you find, then return them to where they live.

This is what scientists do! They explore, observe and collect evidence, record the findings. What we didn't do was make some guesses (hypothesis) about what we will find then see if they match what we guessed.

5. To make a hypothesis, can you guess which type of matter (animal, plant, or mineral) we will find the most of?
6. Go on a scavenger hunt and record finding. After you've explored fully, bring together to count and discuss. Tally totals under pictures or words.
7. Now we can compare this to the original hypothesis. Why do you think we found more of one type of matter in this place? How would it be different in the river? or the park? or the beach?

Extension: Calculate the averages of each type of matter after three or more explorations.

Lab Sheet Template

*Remember to label whether each item is biotic or abiotic.

Plants	Animals	Minerals