

Art is in the House



— ACTIVITY

Sound Mapping for Families and Groups

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Listen together and create an artwork that makes sound visible

In this activity, you'll get together with your household¹ to make sound maps - maps of sounds of a place that you know or decide on going to.

What is a Sound Map?

A sound map is a visual representation (a picture) of the sounds around an area. It could be a map of anything or anywhere - your house, your garden, a favourite walk you take with your family, or maybe a park or playground. On that map, you'll list the sounds you hear in different places, and at different levels (more on that later). Once you're done, you'll have a picture of a place that's not about what you see, but what you hear.

Sound maps can take many forms - some of them are real maps that list sounds (they do this a lot online – here's one of the [London Underground](#), and here's a [huge map of sounds from all over the world](#) and some artistic responses to the sounds recorded). The online maps are pretty fun and interesting to explore (so please do so!) but for this exercise we are going to stay in real life for a while, and make a real picture on real paper.

Why are we doing this?

I think sounds are amazing. They're all around us, floating through the air, telling us stories or maybe hinting at stories around us we don't even know are there. They are full of secrets, and full of ideas— all we have to do is listen for them.

In making these sound maps with your household, you'll uncover lots of different secrets in places that maybe you thought you knew or understood. You'll find out things about the place you're in, little stories and secrets that you can record on a map. But the nice thing is that the map is not the place – it's only

1. If you're lucky enough to be somewhere where Coronavirus is no longer an issue, you can do this with friends, you lucky ducks.

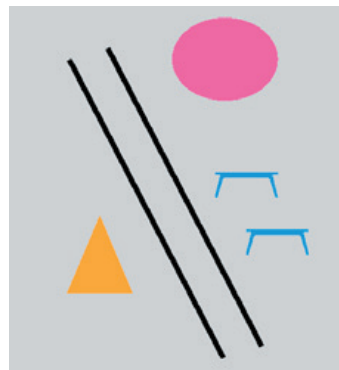
a bookmark or a signal of what is really there. In making this sound map, you're going to bring into your ears and your mind a sound picture that only you'll know. You can share it, and when you do you can inspire other ideas and stories for the other people in your group - but only you will have your sound memories, like a little gift you've made for yourself.

What you need:

- Different coloured pens/pencil crayons/crayons/markers, 1 per group
- Pieces of paper (same size), 1 per group
- Treats and snacks. You need energy.

How to prepare:

1. Divide into groups (1, 2, 3, or more). Each group should have 1 large piece of paper. Best if each group has the same size paper. You can also split off into solo groups of 1 person if you decide you want to do that.
2. Each group should have a pen, pencil crayon or crayon of a different colour.
3. Choose a "level" for each group - low, medium, or high. "Low" means close to the ground; "medium" means head height; and "high" means above your head.
4. Decide on an area and make a map of the area for each group. It's best if the map is close to the same for each group. Here's an example of a playground/park: →
5. Once you're ready to head out, have a treat. You know, for energy.



Marking the map:

1. **Go to the place you want to map, and decide on a starting point.**
All the groups can start together, or they can start in different places. You don't have to be together the whole time, in fact each group will probably take different amounts of time to complete the map.
2. **Take a moment to get quiet.**
Stop talking and sit or stand for a moment with your group. Close your eyes and start to listen around you. Try and listen further and further, and then closer and closer to you. Maybe you'll hear your heart beat and you can put it on the map!
3. **Start mapping sounds - listen closely!**
An example of a sound that the "low" group might hear is "crunching leaves" or "gravel". It can be a sound that you make when you move, or a sound that you hear in a certain place. You can make arrows if the sound is moving, or you can put a dot if the sound is

somewhere specific. Perhaps you're making the sound, like striking some monkey bars, or perhaps something else (a squirrel?) is making the sound. Maybe if the sound is heard throughout an area, you can make a shape or circle for how large the area is (this might happen a lot for the "high" group). There's no rules at all!

4. **When you note a sound, note also how it sounds - not just "squirrel", but "munching squirrel" or "chitter chatter of squirrel".** Be as descriptive as possible.
5. **Go through the whole area.**
Maybe you've all decided to take a path through the area, or maybe each group will wander through the area until they've got all the sounds they can.
6. **After you've all finished, have a treat.** You've worked hard.

After mapping:

1. Gather at home with your maps and share them with the other groups.
What was the most interesting sound you heard? What was the sound you liked best? (These 2 sounds aren't always the same thing!) What was a sound you didn't know was there?
2. Lay the maps on top of each other. What do you see? Something interesting?
Try shining a light through the 3 maps - you can hold them up and shine a light through, or if you have a glass table you can shine a light from below. Maybe you can make a map that has all the information on one map.
3. You can colour your maps more, maybe paste pictures of some of the places on your map. Hang the maps up somewhere. Share them with your friends online!
4. You should probably have another treat. To celebrate. Right?

I hope you had a good time listening and making these maps.

What's nice about a map is that "the map is not the place" - you've made some maps, but the sounds that you heard are yours. You can share them with others by describing them, or placing them on your map, but really they live inside of you.

We're in a strange time right now - there's so much we don't know, so much we hope for, and the world has changed a lot - it even sounds different. But one day we'll be able to be together again, making a racket in playgrounds and in other spaces. By making this map now, you'll have a small memory of that odd time where the world was quiet, and secrets came out for us to hear.

I hope that by finding those secrets now, you'll be able to hear and see the world as it is - full of hidden stories and sounds that are just waiting for you to find them!