



# Blind Trail Walk

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**Activity Name: Blind Trail**

**Ages: 4-teens**

**Activity Level: Moderate**

**Length of time: 25 to 30 min**

**Number of Participants: 10 at any one time**

**Concept:** This activity is great for exploring and describing the world using senses other than sight (touch mostly, but also smell and sound). It helps to create an intimate bond with a place and its inhabitants - especially the plants, rocks and terrain.

**Materials Required:** Blindfolds for all participants. Enough sturdy string or surveyor's tape or even fishing line to mark a trail through the area you are studying.

**Introduction:** This is a rope guided caravan of participants exploring and absorbing the environment around them without the benefit of sight. Should be done in an area with a diversity of landscapes and plants free of any potential hazardous obstacles.

It is important that the route marked offer variety, different themes and mystery. For instance, vary the height of the guide string by attaching it to objects or features from above the head to right on the ground as well as over (such as logs) or under (such as fallen trees) features. Or, have the string follow the ground so participants are on their hands and knees moving under a low canopy of vegetation and so on. You can add a theme such as having them take notice of moisture differences in objects they touch as they move along the trail or perhaps micro climate differences related to north facing and south facing slopes or smells or textures. Decide on which side of the string you want the participants to travel and ensure they stay to that side.

**Methods:** At a designated start point blindfold all the participants and have them line up at the start of the string route. Depending on which side you decide to have them travel, get each in their turn to hold the string in the appropriate hand and tell them to always keep holding or touching the string as they move along the trail. Start them one at a time at spaced intervals (for safety and to increase the personal experience). They are to follow where ever the string takes them, slowly and carefully.

You can put knots along the way to indicate that there is an interesting feature in that place for them to explore more thoroughly (something to smell, or listen to, or feel) based on the theme of the trail. To add mystery you could have one or more branching string lines that go to new area such as a hollow tree, a cave, a rock face. Make this a loop that rejoins the main route again.

### **Tips for Teachers:**

- This activity is a great challenge for younger children and is both exciting and a bit scary (the blindfold part).
- Ideally the strung trail should be done beforehand but one can be improvised as time permits.
- Model the activity for participants - provide a pre trail exercise that will prepare them for the blind trail exploration by:
  - offering samples of different textures of objects to feel, leaves to smell and so on. This gives them an idea on how to explore the trail as they move along it.
  - give an overview of the activity and safety tips.
  - give a rough time line - each participant needs to be done in about 12-15 minutes.
  - use a whistle or some other way to call them in when time has expired.

**Background facts and information:** A quick and valuable followup to this exercise is to have each person take the trail again but without the blindfold then have them gather and share what the differences were between blindfolded and sighted experiences along the trail. Back at the classroom have each participant share what they experienced and for older students write a story about their adventure.

### **Literature Cited:**

Adapted from **Sharing Nature With Children**, Joseph Cornell (1979)