

TIDE POOLS

Twice each day, when high tide waves pound the shore, seawater flows into the nooks and crannies of shoreline rocks. When the tide recedes, some of the water stays behind, forming “tide pools.” These pools of seawater are found in the intertidal zone—the thin band of rocky coast located between the high- and low-tide lines.

Life in a Tide Pool

Tide pools are full of remarkable creatures that are well-adapted to this unique and constantly changing habitat. Tide pool inhabitants must avoid being washed away by waves, keep from drying out in the sunlight during low tide, and avoid being eaten—so they are designed to wander, swim, crawl, hang on, and hide.

Go “Tide Pooling”

Go out on the shoreline rocks during low tide and check out the tide pools. When you observe sea stars, anemones, urchins, barnacles, crabs, and seaweed in a tide pool, you are seeing some very hardy species that are marvelously adapted to live in these unique, tiny, dynamic ecosystems.

Ready, Set, Go Outside!

Parent/Teacher Note

Skills Learned:

Observation and comparison: light, color, physical properties, waves, observing wildlife behavior, identification, physiological adaptations, habitat comparisons

Math: counting, measuring, mixing

Creative expression: creative writing, illustration, design, sharing, performing, food preparation and presentation

Information science: researching information, finding images

Exploration Tips:

1. Always go exploring with an adult.
2. Wear appropriate footwear. Beach rocks are covered with wet seaweed and are very slippery.
3. Protect your skin from sunburn.
4. Be aware of the tides. It is safest (and most interesting) to go at low tide, but always keep a watchful eye on the waves.
5. Bring a field guide or printed identification sheet to help identify the animals and plants you see. Our favorite is Mass Audubon’s Beachcombers Guide to the North Atlantic Seashore.
6. To protect wildlife, leave plants and animals in their pools and avoid stepping on them.

Things to Look For:

- A variety of creatures—notice how some are attached to the rocks, others are moving about, and some are hiding among seaweeds.
- A range of seaweeds, including kelp, Irish moss, rockweeds, and sea lettuce. Look for the air sacs on rockweeds that keep them floating near the surface of the pool to catch oxygen and sunlight.
- A place where an animal could hide.
- An animal hunting and catching food.
- The extreme low-tide zone, where the pools are practically connected to the ocean and are exposed for only a few hours a day.
- A high-tide pool, farther away from the water and flooded only during extreme high tides.

ONLINE BONUS!

Learn more at:
www.massaudubon.org/go

- ▶ Great Times to Visit
- ▶ Post-Tide Pool Activities