

Teaching Children to Use Binoculars

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I do this before my ABNL week so kids are ready with the knowledge to use binoculars when they are out in nature. It works best with everyone having their own binoculars, but I have also done it when pairs share.

1. **Why**-Discuss why we might want to get a “close up look” at something from a distance, like wild life or the top of a tree or building.
2. **Safety**-Take the binoculars out of the case and have them put the strap around their necks with the case hanging down their backs, out of the way. Emphasize that the strap must always be around their necks.
3. **How**-Look at the 2 different ends and have them discover which way to look into the binoculars so that far things look close.
4. **Fit**-Start with the binoculars rolled out as far as possible. Have children look into them and squeeze them slowly together until the 2 circles they see merge into 1 circle.
5. **Locate**-Have the children stare at a large object (car, tree, flag, etc.) that isn't too far away. They need to stare hard at the object while they bring the binoculars up to their eyes-without looking away.
6. **Focus**-As they stare through the binoculars at the object have them put their finger on the rolling focus wheel on top. They should roll the wheel until the object becomes clear and focused.
7. **Safety**-Stress that they should NEVER walk with binoculars up to their eyes because it is dangerous.

***I practice these steps in the classroom several times using different activities. As they get better I put small stuffed animals around the room to look at. I also have posters with writing for them to read. Children can work in pairs and hold up pictures of Michigan birds, math fact flash cards, you name it.*

Next we are ready to venture outside to the playground when it is empty of children. Everyone picks a spot to sit and looks at several different things. We talk about the details that we could only observe through the binoculars.

Finally, we go out, listening first before using the binoculars. When we hear a sound, we try to stare where it is coming from as we lift the binoculars. For some kids it is enough just to look at a tree, flower or cloud with the binoculars, but for some they are able to track the sound and see what made it.