

Design a Park

What are some features of different parks? What features would you include in a new park?

Overview

Students brainstorm and list features of parks. Working in groups, they make decisions together about what to include in a new park and create a poster to display their park design.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://education.nationalgeographic.org/activity/design-park/>

With Support From



Directions

1. Activate students' knowledge about parks.

With paper and pencil ready, have students think about their own experience with parks. Have them close their eyes and imagine a place called "My Park," thinking about the things to see and do in this imaginary park. After about 30 seconds, have them share their ideas. Write key features of parks on the board. Ideas may include: places to run, play, climb, look at plants or animals, or picnic.

2. View photos of parks and add ideas.

Show students the Parks Slideshow from the resource carousel above. As they view the slides, ask students to make observations about what they see in these parks. Add students' observations to the list of features on the board. Some topics to discuss include:

- *What makes parks unique? Why might people want to visit them?* (a monument, a historical site, geological features such as geysers or rock formations, a river or lake, mountain range)
- *What activities might people do in the park?* (canoeing, hiking, fishing, learning about history or wildlife)
- *What are things that people might need while at these parks?* (Answers may include trails, campsites, a place to buy food and supplies, trashcans and recycling bins, bathrooms, water, and more.)

3. Show the location for a new park.

Put students in groups of three, and explain that they together will have an opportunity to design a new park. This park can have features that they choose, and they will also need to think through what the park will need to have so that people can visit, see what makes the park special, and also take care of the park.

Distribute copies of the Design a Park handouts to each group. Using digital or paper maps, you can either have students search the local area for a good place for a new park, or you can give them a location you have chosen in advance. Discuss as a group why this location will be good for a new park.

4. Brainstorm characteristics of their parks.

On the Step 1: Brainstorm page of the Design a Park handout, have students write their ideas for what their new park might include. They can use ideas from the class discussion, and they can also include new ideas. Encourage them to be creative and to write down a variety of ideas.

5. Have students discuss their ideas.

Have students look at Step 2: Think About Your Ideas. Have them work together as a group to answer the questions, adding to their ideas in Step 1. Help students recognize the need for planning their park so that it will stay a nice place to visit, for example, by including trash and recycling bins and also signs that remind people to take care of this park.

Students can then use red, blue, and green markers to categorize their ideas from Step 1. They should circle in red what their park will *need to have*, and circle in blue what they *would like to have* in their park. They can also underline *all living things* in green.

6. Narrow the ideas.

Explain to students that budget concerns, location, and other factors mean that all parks can't have every idea they brainstormed. In Step 3, each group will need to make some decisions. Have students refer to their ideas from Step 1 and follow the directions on that page to narrow their ideas. They will need to choose one main reason—an activity or a feature—for why people will visit their park. They then discuss and write a second and third reason why people will want to visit.

Next, each group chooses five things the park *must have*, so that people can enjoy the three activities or features of the park. They will then choose seven *nice to have* things for their park. They

also list the *living things* in their park, which will be important as they plan how to take care of the park.

7. Create a design for a new park.

Have each group look closely at Step 4: Draw Your Park and use this checklist to help them create a poster with a design for their park. Have them include all of the features they decided to include in Step 3. Explain that this map would help communicate their ideas to both the local government and future visitors to the park.

Modification

For a more tactile learning experience, provide students with clay and other craft and recycling items. Have them create a model of their park instead of a two-dimensional drawing.

Tip

Instead of writing on the handouts for Design a Park Steps 1, 2, and 3, have students use them as a guide and write on large sheets of butcher paper. Students can use sticky notes for their brainstorming and move ideas around into “must have” and “nice to have” groups.

Tip

In Step 2, instead of a discussion, hold a silent conversation. Write each of the discussion topics given on the board. As you move through the slide show, invite students to come up and add information to each topic.

Tip

To give students direct experience, take them to a nearby park to make observations before brainstorming features of parks.

Tip

Use paper or digital maps to choose locations for the parks. You can have all students create a park in the same location or provide different locations.

Informal Assessment

Evaluate each park design by assessing each group’s final product and Design a Park handout Steps 1-4, to see how well they brainstormed, thought through their ideas, made decisions, and applied those decisions in their design. Students should also have followed the directions in the Step 4 checklist.

Extending the Learning

- Have students use persuasive writing to develop a pitch for funding for the new park. Their pitch can include visuals such as a map, examples of plants and animals, a rationale for why the park is important, a description of the sights and/or activities that will make people want to come to their park, and a strategy for protecting their park.

- Invite a city planner or other town administrator to hear students' presentations and give feedback.
- Have students design a brochure for their park. They should include a brief description of the park and highlight the aspects of their park that they think will make people want to visit.

Objectives

Subjects & Disciplines

Geography

- Cartography

Language Arts

- Writing (composition)

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- identify features of a variety of parks.
- collaborate and make decisions about features of a new park.
- design a new park based on the features identified.

Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Multimedia instruction
- Writing

Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Student Outcomes
 - Learning and Innovation Skills
 - Communication and Collaboration
 - Creativity and Innovation
 - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- 21st Century Themes
 - Environmental Literacy
- Critical Thinking Skills
 - Analyzing
 - Applying
 - Creating
 - Evaluating

- Geographic Skills
 - Organizing Geographic Information

National Standards, Principles, and Practices

National Council for Social Studies Curriculum Standards

- **Theme 10:**

Civic Ideals and Practices

National Geography Standards

- **Standard 1:**

How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

- **Writing Standard 3.2:**

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

- **Writing Standard 3.4:**

With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

- **Writing Standard 4.4:**

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

Next Generation Science Standards

- **Engineering Design:**

3-5-ETS1-2. Generate and compare multiple possible solutions to a problem based on how well each is likely to meet the criteria and constraints of the problem.

Preparation

What You'll Need

Materials You Provide

- Colored markers
- Colored pencils
- Paper
- Butcher paper (optional)
- Posterboard
- Pencils

Required Technology

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector

Physical Space

- Classroom

Setup

Arrange the classroom to facilitate students working in small groups.

Grouping

- Large-group instruction

Resources Provided: Handouts & Worksheets

- [Design A Park](#)

Resources Provided: Images

- Design a Park Slideshow 1
- Design a Park Slideshow 2
- Design a Park Slideshow 3
- Design a Park Slideshow 4
- Design a Park Slideshow 5
- Design a Park Slideshow 6
- Design a Park Slideshow 7
- Design a Park Slideshow 8
- Design a Park Slideshow 9
- Design a Park Slideshow 10
- Design a Park Slideshow 11
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Background & Vocabulary

Background Information

The United States has more than 400 National Parks that see more than 275 million visitors each year. These parks are under the care of the National Park Service, which works to preserve the natural and cultural resources found in these parks and to make them available to people to enjoy.

There are several types of parks within the National Park system, each of which serves a different purpose. National Seashores are coastal areas that are considered important for natural and recreation purposes. National Parks are areas preserved for unique natural attractions, and they are usually strictly protected. The Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and Arches are examples of National

Parks. National Preserves, such as the Great Sand Dunes in Colorado, are similar to National Parks, but certain recreation activities, such as hunting and fishing, are allowed. National Recreation Areas allow even more recreation activities, such as boating.

National Monuments are the only type of park that can be designated by the president. They preserve places of historic or scientific interest, but they tend to be smaller than national parks. Devil's Tower is an example of a National Monument. National Battlefields preserve the site of historically significant battles. National Historic Sites usually preserve a single site, such as a president's home, and are often small (less than an acre), while National Historical Parks are usually larger and preserve more than one building. Ford's Theater in Washington DC is an example of a Historic Site. Lowell, Massachusetts is an example of a Historical Park. National Memorials, such as the Washington Monument and Vietnam Veterans Memorial, are built to commemorate people or events.

Prior Knowledge

["None"]

Recommended Prior Activities

- None

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
park	<i>noun</i>	area of land set aside for recreational use.

For Further Exploration

Websites

- [National Park Service](#)
- [State Parks](#)
- [National Geographic - National Parks](#)



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