



# VINS Wee Wonders Program Lesson Descriptions

2023/2024

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## Science and Nature Discoveries for Toddlers *Ages 18 months – 3 years*

Each lesson begins with a song and meeting a puppet that introduces the topic for the day. Activities, guided play, and natural materials help children experience nature and science. Lessons typically last 20-30 minutes and end with a closing song.

### **Animal Homes**

Who lives here? Look at bird nests, peer inside a den, and discover who calls a stone wall home. Peek-a-boo, I see you! Find the animal hiding behind the flap in each habitat scene.

### **Animals in Winter**

How do animals survive the cold winter months? Examine the fur of an otter and make a hill for the otter to slide down! In our songbird game, help fill our birdfeeders to keep the birds fed during the winter. *Available December – February.*

### **Apples – NEW!**

Meet some animals that love to eat apples, fill your basket with pretend fruit and discover all the many different colors of apples. Play with soft plush apples and see if you can roll them or toss them into a basket. *Available in Fall.*

### **Baby Animals – NEW!**

Come to the edge of our pretend pond and meet Mama duck and her little ducklings! Look at some baby animals and their parents, and help the bald eagles care for their eaglets in the nest. *Available in Spring.*

### **Bats**

Step into the night and explore the world of bats. Swoop after your dinner, roost in a cave, and play hide-and-seek with a bat in its natural habitat. Take a close look at the skeleton of a bat.



## **Bears**

Learn about the lives of black bears by touching their soft thick fur and playing with bear puppets. Follow the tracks of a bear as it walks and climbs a tree and then crawl into a pretend bear den for a long winter's nap.

## **Beavers**

Help to build a pretend beaver dam at the edge of the pond using sticks. Crawl into a beaver lodge to see who's inside, and touch their waterproof fur. Watch out! Slap your beaver tail to warn the baby beavers about hungry otters and bears.

*Note: This lesson includes using real sticks.*

## **Big Bridges**

Set up arch bridges to cross a river, and build bridges out of blocks and tree slices. Can you drive your toy car over, under, and around your bridge? Can a boat go under your bridge?

## **Birds**

Touch the wings of different bird species and see if you can match the wings to the picture. Soar like a bald eagle, flap like a hummingbird and stand tall and still like a great blue heron. Make a pretend nest for the plush bird puppets.

## **Butterflies**

Flutter from flower to flower, but keep your eyes out for a hungry bird! Become a butterfly as you dance with colorful scarves and wrist ribbons, and play with some butterfly puppets.

## **Chipmunks and Squirrels**

Can you scamper like a chipmunk or a squirrel? How many acorns can you carry in your little paws? Fill your squirrel nest with food for the winter and curl up for a rest.

## **Deer and Moose**

How do you measure up against a moose? Follow the tracks of a deer and a moose and touch their hooves. Feel the pelt of each animal and take a close look at their antlers. Hide the fawn in the grass so it stays safe.

## **Demolition**

Can you use a wrecking ball to knock down a tower of blocks? What kind of wrecking ball works the best?

## **Fall Leaves**

Toss some leaves into the air, smell them and crinkle them in your hands. Look at all the colors and make a fall leaf rainbow. Peek-a-boo! Who's that hiding under a leaf?

*Available in Fall. Note: If taught indoors, this lesson includes bringing lots of fall leaves into the classroom*

## **Feathers and Fur – NEW!**

Fuzzy and soft, smooth and silky; use your fingers to explore different textures as you touch the feathers and fur from real animals. Match the fur or feathers to the picture and pretend you are an animal in nature.

## **Frogs and Toads**

Can you jump like a frog and hop like a toad? Play with a realistic toy frog as it floats in the water, hops on a lily pad, and hides from the hungry fox.

*Note: This lesson includes playing with toy frogs in bins of shallow water, and children may get wet*

## **Insects**

Turn yourself into a variety of insects as you go on a parade. See if you can jump like a grasshopper or flap your wings like a honeybee. Look at real insects up close using big bug viewers. *Available in Spring and Fall.*

## **Loose Parts**

Let your imagination run wild as you explore a wide array of loose parts carefully designed to inspire, engage and captivate young engineers. This collection of loose parts contains natural materials, wooden pieces and colorful fabrics.

## **Mixtures and Colors**

Watch patterns appear, shift and disappear as you explore a set of shakers and sparkle balls. Watch what happens to the food coloring in the jars of water and try to make your own swirling colors as you dance with scarves. What colors can you find in nature?

## **Our Senses**

Pretend you're a hungry owl as you test out your eyesight to find hidden animals. Use your sense of touch to explore natural items and a variety of different textures. Play with loose parts that make different sounds.

## **Owls**

Get an up-close look at the wings of different owl species, and compare their silent flight to the noisy flight of a hawk. Pretend you are an owl as you fly quietly and slowly. Can you help to feed the baby owls in their nest?

## **Ponds and Streams – NEW!**

Hear the sounds of a bubbling stream, splash your fingers in a pool of water and play with the baby ducks as they swim around. Meet some other animals that live in and near water. *Note: This lesson includes playing with toy ducks in bins of shallow water; children may get wet*

## **Pumpkins**

How many little bright orange pumpkins can you put in the basket? Play with pumpkin seed shakers, and see what happens when you put a pumpkin in a bin of water! *Available in Fall.*

## **Puppies and Kittens**

Match adorable pictures of puppies and kittens and learn about their wild cousins, the coyote pups and bobcat kittens. Feel their fur, peek in a den and make sure the pups and kittens are well fed.

## **Rabbits and Hares**

Feel the soft fur of a rabbit, play with baby bunnies, and make a nice cozy nest for them. Turn yourself into a rabbit and use your ears to listen. Watch out! Here comes the hungry fox!

## **Race Car Ramps**

Use engaging, unique materials to build a ramp for your race car. How far and how fast does your car go? Can you make your ramp include a tunnel? See also *Toddler Ramps*

## **Sink and Float**

Why do some things float and others sink? Choose an object, and test it out. Did it float? Did it sink? *Note: This lesson includes playing in bins of shallow water, and children may get wet.*

## **Snakes**

Explore the wonderful world of snakes as you touch a snakeskin and examine a snake skeleton. Slither like a snake and bask in the sun. Meet a live snake ambassador from VINS.

*Note: This lesson involves a live animal. Children will need to wash their hands after touching the snake.*

## **Spiders**

Work together to build a spider web. Can you catch any flies in your web? Play with plush spider puppets, meet some real spiders and take a close look at what makes these animals special.

## **Tall Towers**

Use a set of unique rounded and square cork blocks to test your tower-building skills. These special blocks are lightweight and inspire creativity and imagination.

## **Toddler Ramps**

Send a ball down a ramp and see where it goes. Test out several different types of balls and see which rolls the best. What else can you find to roll down your ramp? A pinecone? Acorn? Leaf? See also *Race Car Ramps*

## **Tracks**

Follow the tracks of a coyote, bear and deer and touch the feet that make the prints. Using footprint cards, set out a pattern for your friends to follow. Will they need to hop, take baby steps or use giant strides?

## **Trees – NEW!**

Reach your arms up high to touch the sky, and wiggle your feet as you send your roots underground. Feel the bark of different trees, look at their leaves, and peer into a hollow log. Meet some animals that like to live in trees.

## **Turtles**

Touch the shell of a turtle, feel a turtle's backbone, and pretend to bury turtle eggs in the sand. Meet a turtle ambassador of VINS, and see what she likes to eat.

*Note: This lesson involves a live animal. Children will need to wash their hands after touching the turtle.*

## **World of Water**

Create an imaginary pond, ocean or stream with blue scarves. Investigate the world of water as you play with animals that call water home. Can you help Otter catch some fish? Use a small net to see how many you can catch!

*Note: This lesson includes playing in bins of shallow water, and children may get wet.*