



unplug  
ILLINOIS

# Unplug Illinois Activity Guide

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PARK & RECREATION ASSOCIATION





# **Unplug Illinois is a program of the Illinois Park and Recreation Association, designed to encourage people to “unplug” from technology and plug into, play, creativity, family and adventure.**

During these times, we know it can be difficult to unplug, and engaging in exercise can be a challenge. Unplug Illinois promotes getting up and getting out, whether you go for a walk, bike ride or hike.

We hope you enjoy this activity guide, which is designed to give you and your family plenty of creative ways to unplug at home and at your local park and recreation agency.

# Why Unplug?

**Unplugging delivers many physical, mental, social and health benefits:**

## **Improve your physical health.**

Getting 30 minutes of physical activity can improve blood pressure, lower cholesterol, reduce stress and extend life expectancy according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

## **Improve your mental health.**

The National Recreation and Park Association states that more time spent in parks and green spaces can help individuals fight against mental health issues like depression, anxiety and stress.

## **Improve your social interactions.**

Spending time with family and friends helps cope with trauma, encourages healthy habits and can lower health risks such as stress and high blood pressure according to the Mayo Clinic.

## **Improve your lifestyle.**

Committing to taking time away from screens can improve sleep cycles, boost being present in the moment, increase productivity and improve social connections.

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## **Parks Deliver Many Benefits:**

**Parks deliver value in people's lives and communities by generating local revenue and jobs.**

**Parks provide healthier, sustainable communities by encouraging psychological and physical health.**

# Make Fruit and Vegetable Stamp Art

Get the chance to play with food by making stamps out of fruits and vegetables. Recycle produce by using them to make exciting prints on paper or fabric.



## Supplies

- Paper
- Fruits and vegetables, ideally those that have passed their expiration date
  - Apples, pears, oranges, bananas, lemons, broccoli, cauliflower, bell peppers, potatoes, carrots, corn, mushrooms, bok choy, brussel sprouts, snow peas and okra are all great options.*
- Tempera or poster paint
- Plastic plates or trays
- Cutting board
- Knife

In addition to paper you can decorate aprons, placemats, table cloths, bandanas and even clothing! Just swap your tempera or poster paint with an acrylic or fabric paint.

## Directions

Gather fruits and veggies. Wash and wipe dry.

Prepare the stamps! Fruits and veggies can be cut in many different ways. Experiment to create different effects and find what you like best. For example:

*Apples and pears cut in half (splitting top from bottom) expose the star shape that the seeds make*

*Cut the bottom of the bok choy bunch to make a rose print*

*Potatos are great for creating custom shapes*

*Corn on the cob can be used as is like a rolling pin*

Put different colors of paint in shallow plates or containers.

Dip your stamp into a tray of paint,

making sure that the bottom is evenly-coated and gently shake off any excess paint.

Press the painted side of the fruit or vegetable stamp firmly onto the paper or fabric.



Lift to admire your print!

Wipe off the paint from your stamps before dipping into other colors to avoid getting mud-colored prints.

There are so many different techniques to try. You can make random prints, patterns, overlapping designs or even try composing a picture!



Photos and Adapted Craft Instructions Courtesy of [FirstPalette.com](https://www.firstpalette.com)

# Bring Your Leaf Bug Art to Life

Make leaf bugs from different leaves and twigs. This creative leaf art really pops on bright painted backgrounds made from recycled cardboard and makes a fun wall art idea.

## Supplies

- Recycled heavy cardboard cut into squares
- Acrylic paint (optional)
- Tacky craft glue (ordinary craft glue probably won't hold well enough)
- Mod podge
- Hole punch
- Paint brush
- Leaves, sticks and twigs from the garden in assorted shapes and sizes



## Directions

- Paint your cardboard square with acrylic paint and allow to dry
- Arrange some nature items on the painted square to look like an

insect to get your basic design

- Remove the items and then place them back on with tacky craft glue to hold them down
- Paint over with mod podge.

*This provides a shiny protective coat that helps prevent the leaves from crumbling and drying out, though they may still fade, curl and brown a bit over time.*

- To make an eye, punch a hole from a leaf and use the circle you have removed as an eye (or find a naturally occurring round shape from nature)



Photos and Craft Instructions Courtesy of Kate Grono from [TheCraftTrain.com](http://TheCraftTrain.com)

# Plug Into...

NATURE  
ART  
FAMILY  
CULTURE

FUN  
CREATIVITY  
ACTIVITY  
HISTORY

COMMUNITY  
FITNESS  
JOY  
ADVENTURE

BAKING  
FRIENDSHIP  
EXERCISE  
PLAY

X	F	X	V	E	V	G	A	P	U	T	R	F	Y	A	B
L	D	A	I	U	M	C	J	D	S	A	U	T	N	D	A
P	E	A	M	X	T	Q	Y	S	M	N	I	Z	O	V	K
S	X	E	S	I	C	R	E	X	E	V	U	J	Y	E	I
Y	J	D	V	M	L	N	E	A	I	T	R	A	R	N	N
H	N	I	U	E	T	Y	Q	T	W	A	X	I	O	T	G
C	T	U	H	I	J	F	A	R	S	B	R	A	T	U	W
Y	O	K	F	R	I	E	N	D	S	H	I	P	S	R	S
E	C	M	K	W	R	N	A	T	U	R	E	B	I	E	T
M	R	U	M	C	J	P	E	J	R	B	E	Q	H	P	M
P	G	U	A	U	L	K	L	H	O	L	S	L	K	E	V
H	N	E	T	A	N	F	K	R	J	B	Z	Y	S	M	Y
L	N	E	Y	L	V	I	R	N	R	E	A	E	S	J	O
C	L	T	V	G	U	Q	T	J	A	X	F	E	B	O	J
H	J	M	I	V	H	C	J	Y	Y	L	I	Q	L	L	A
O	R	W	P	Z	K	C	T	C	X	E	V	K	Y	T	J

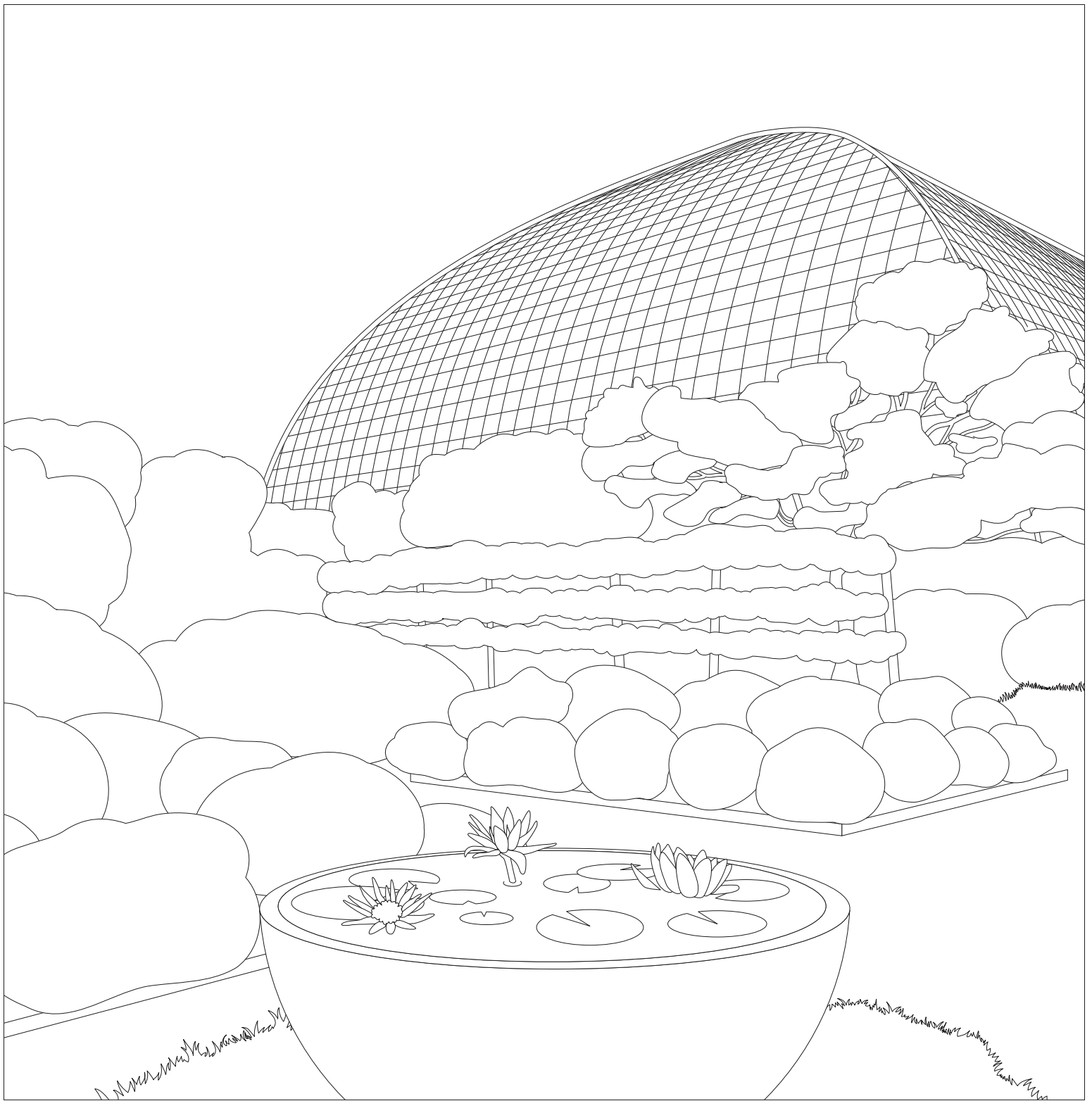


# Find Illinois Wildlife

Just like you, every mammal, bird, amphibian and reptile in this list calls Illinois home. Each has its own special role in the ecosystem. See if you can spot them out and about and in the word search below!

GROUND SKINK	VULTURE	QUEENSNAKE	AMERICAN TOAD
CHIPMUNK	RACCOON	BAT	GROUNDHOG
COYOTE	STRIPED SKUNK	EASTERN NEWT	WEASEL
RIVER OTTER	RED FOX	WOODPECKER	PAINTED TURTLE





**The Garfield Park Conservatory brings together people, plants and culture in a big city! The Conservatory is home to 70 palms, ferns in a swampy landscape, plants native to the desert including cacti and succulents, lily pad pools and more!**

**The building and plant collection are owned and managed by the Chicago Park District in conjunction with The Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance and is located on Chicago's west side.**





**Meyer Woods Park in the Darien Park District is a 10-acre oak grove oasis. The park was built on the site of a farm and still features the original barn, which was built in 1913.**



Many park and recreation agencies feature zoos and farm animals. Miller Park, a part of Bloomington Park & Recreation, Cosley Zoo in the Wheaton Park District and Blackberry Farm in the Fox Valley Park District are a few locations with live animals. Color your own farm animals above!

# Bake Sweet Animal Treats

You'll have a hoot making these beary good desserts.

## Brown Bear Cookies



**Yield: 12 Cookies**  
**Total Time: 25 mins**

### Ingredients

- Oatmeal cookie mix, plus ingredients called for on package
- Granulated sugar, for rolling
- Brown M&M's
- Mini chocolate chips

### Directions

Preheat oven to 375° and line two large baking sheets with parchment paper. In a large bowl, prepare oatmeal cookie dough according to package instructions.

Shape cookie dough into six 1" balls for the bear head. Flatten bear heads with a glass. Shape smaller 1/2" balls for the ears and snouts. Place two balls on the top of each bear head to create ears. Roll the dough balls being used for snouts in sugar and place in the bottom center of the bear head. Carefully flatten the smaller balls.

Bake until golden, 8 to 10 minutes. While the bear cookies are still warm, place an M&M on the snout to make a nose and use two mini chocolate chips to make eyes.

Let cool completely.

## Owl Cupcakes

**Yield: 24 Cupcakes**  
**Total Time: 1 hr 20 mins**

### Ingredients

- 1 box chocolate cake batter, plus ingredients called for on box
- 1 (16-oz.) tub chocolate frosting
- 24 Oreos, halved
- 48 chocolate mini M&Ms
- 24 orange mini M&Ms

### Directions

Preheat oven to 350° and line 2 12-cup muffin tins with black cupcake liners. Prepare cupcake

batter according to package directions.

Scoop cupcake batter into liners and bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 22 to 25 minutes. Let cool.

Frost cupcakes with chocolate frosting, making two swooshes on top for ears!

Top with Oreo halves, icing side up for eyes. Dot the bottom of chocolate mini M&Ms with frosting

and place on top of Oreo halves for eyeballs.

Place an orange mini M&M for the nose.



Photos and Recipes Courtesy of Lauren Miyashiro and Lindsay Funston from [Delish.com](http://Delish.com)



# Channel Your Inner Animal

Frog jump your way into fitness with the following exercises to keep kids moving. According to the CDC, the prevalence of obesity in children ages 2-19 is 18.5% and affects about 13.7 million children and adolescents.

## Inchworm Walk

Start in a standing position. Bend forward, lower your hands to ground, and keep your feet still as you walk out to a plank. From the plank, keep your hands still as you walk your feet in toward your hands.

## Bear Crawl

Start on your hands and knees. Gently lift your knees 1 to 2 inches off the ground and keep back flat.

## Crab Walk

Start on your bottom with your hands behind your back and legs bent at the knees. Lift your bottom off the ground.

## Frog Jump

Start in deep squat with your hands on the ground. Jump up as high as you can with your hands and feet leaving ground at the same time.

## Alligator Crawl

Start on your belly, staying as low to the ground as possible. Alternate using your right arm and left leg and left arm and right leg to move forward.

# Relax with Yoga

Fun, relaxing yoga poses the whole family can enjoy!

## Butterfly Pose

Sit on your buttocks with a tall spine, bend your legs, place the soles of your feet together, and gently flap your legs like the wings of a butterfly.

## Tree Pose

Stand on one leg, bend your knee, place the sole of your foot on your inner thigh, and balance.

Come to an all-fours position, round your back, and tuck your chin into your chest.

## Cat Pose

## Cobra Pose

Lie on your tummy, place palms flat next to your shoulders, press into hands, lift head and shoulders off ground, and hiss like a snake.

## Mountain Pose

Stand tall with legs hip-width apart, feet facing forward, and straighten your arms alongside your body.

## Lotus Pose

Sit on your heels, stretch fingers out in front of you, and place heels of palms together.

Poses and Descriptions Courtesy of [kidsyogastories.com](http://kidsyogastories.com)

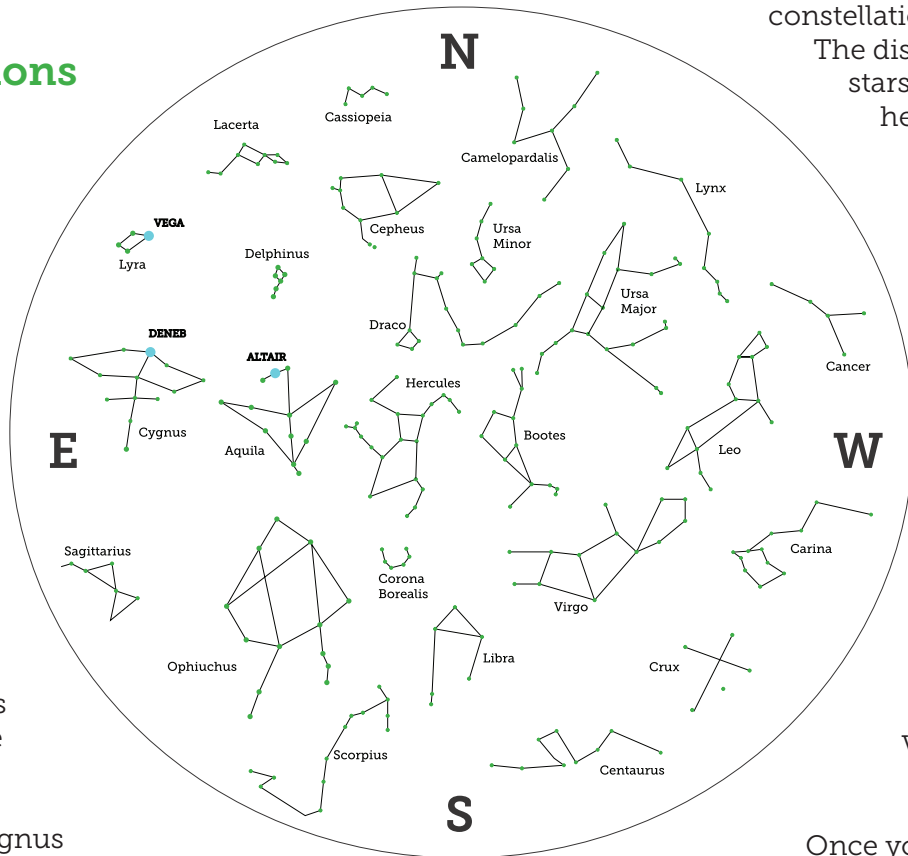
# Constellations

There are five main constellations that can be seen in the northern hemisphere all year round; The Summer Triangle, Scorpius, Sagittarius, Corona Borealis, and Delphinus. Start with the big dipper to establish your directions and explore the night sky!

## Summer Constellations

To find the constellations visible in the summer sky, first find the Summer Triangle. The Summer Triangle isn't a constellation but rather a noticeable pattern of stars. This pattern consists of three bright stars in three separate constellations – Deneb in the constellation Cygnus the Swan, Vega in the constellation Lyra the Harp, and Altair in the constellation Aquila the Eagle.

To find the Summer Triangle, look east for a sparkling blue-white star. That will be Vega, in Lyra. Vega is also the brightest of the Summer Triangle's three stars. Look to the lower right of Vega to locate the Summer Triangle's second brightest star, Altair. Altair is the brightest star in the



constellation Aquila the Eagle. The distance between the two stars is the span of a ruler held at arm's length.

Look to the lower left of Vega for another bright star – Deneb, the brightest in the constellation Cygnus the Swan and the third brightest in the Summer Triangle. An outstretched hand at arm's length approximates the distance from Vega to Deneb.

Once you are able to locate the Summer Triangle, it helps serve as a road map to all the other summer constellations. Additionally, Cassiopeia, Cepheus, Draco, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor in the northern hemisphere and Carina, Centaurus and Crux in the southern are several prominent constellations that dominate the summer sky along with the southern zodiac constellations Sagittarius and Scorpius, and the large constellations Hercules in the northern and Ophiuchus in the southern sky.



# Ways to be Kind

According to Happiness.com, "science and studies show that being kind and helpful clearly has a positive and uplifting effect on those carrying out the act". Acts of kindness release feel-good hormones, and can help lower anxiety. And it's a great way to show people you care and appreciate them!

1. Convert mini libraries into pantries
2. Paint "kindness" rocks and place around the community
3. Create uplifting sidewalk chalk art

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8. \_\_\_\_\_  
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# How We Will Unplug

Unplug from technology and plug into adventure, activity, creativity, family, nature and play. Unplug Illinois encourages people to 'plug into' opportunities that local park and recreation agencies offer. How will you unplug?

1. Go on a walk and have a nature scavenger hunt

2. Play a game of charades with family

3. Create an indoor camping adventure

4. \_\_\_\_\_

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# Benefits of Unplugging

Unplugging has been shown to help improve quality of life, help you feel more recharged every day, help you sleep better and improve your interpersonal communication skills.

## Plug Into Activity

Getting 30 minutes of physical activity can improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels, reduce stress and extend life expectancy, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Plug Into Creativity

Taking part in creative activities can improve physical and mental wellbeing including improving chronic pain, frailty and dementia.

## Plug Into Nature

Studies from the National Recreation and Park Association show that more time spent in parks and green spaces can help individuals fight against mental health issues like depression, anxiety and stress.

## Plug Into Play

Play can help relieve stress, improve brain function, stimulate the mind and boost creativity, improve relationships and your connections to others and keep you feeling young and energetic.



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To Learn More Visit  
[UnplugIllinois.org](http://UnplugIllinois.org)



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