

Forest Succession Rock, Paper, Scissors

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

This activity teaches students about forest succession by engaging them in a rock-paper-scissors style game. Students begin as seeds and progress through various stages of tree growth, from sapling to young tree to mature forest tree. If they lose a round of rock-paper-scissors, they return to the seed stage. The game can be paused to discuss environmental disturbances like deforestation, wildfires, and tsunamis, demonstrating how natural disasters impact succession.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. No specific materials required
2. Optional: Visual aids to show different tree growth stages
3. SL BAGS: Not applicable

SAFETY NOTES/CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensure students have space to move safely without collisions.
- Be mindful of outdoor hazards such as uneven terrain.
- Include any relevant first aid considerations.

ACTIVITY

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Explain the concept of forest succession.
- Introduce the rules of the rock-paper-scissors game and how it relates to tree growth.

Main Activity | 15-20 min

- Students start as seeds.
- Winning a round of rock-paper-scissors allows them to grow into the next stage (seed→sprout→seedling→sapling→adult→mature tree).
- Losing a round forces them to revert to the seed stage.
- Instructors can pause the game to introduce disturbances (e.g., fire, deforestation, logging, tsunami) and discuss their effects on succession.
- Display the full river for the class to observe.

Discussion (10–15 minutes)

- What did you learn about forest succession?
- How do disturbances impact ecosystems?
- How does this activity relate to real-world forest changes?

ACCOMMODATIONS & ALTERNATE PARTICIPATION

- Students with mobility limitations can use hand signals instead of movement.

- Pair students up to play in a seated format if needed.
- Provide visual aids or written instructions for additional support.

(if relevant) **PROGRESSIONS & EARLY FINISHERS THINGS TO DO**

- Allow students to take turns acting as an “environmental event” to impact the game.
- Discuss real-life examples of forest succession and compare them to the game outcomes.