

# Hello Trees Resource Sheet

## What to look for outdoors All Year

### Bark versus Skin



Bark protects a tree from animals, fungi, insects, rot, rain, heat, frost, fire and impact.



Wow! That is some useful stuff to have around you.  
I could do with some of that to protect me.



Imagine walking about with thick, stiff, bark all around you!



Well, that's the point, isn't? A tree doesn't move, and we do.



What do we have instead of bark?

We have skin instead of bark.

Does our skin prevent us from walking about?

No, our skin is elastic and stretches and contracts to let us bend our hips, knees and ankles – or our shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers, toes, neck and back.

And our skin stretches when we grow! Bark has trouble stretching - but that is another story.

Does our skin do for us any of the things that bark does for a tree?



Does our skin protect us from animals?

Animals with sharp teeth could bite through our skin.

How do we protect ourselves from being bitten by animals?

I can think of some ways. Can you?

- I can be kind to animals so that they don't want to bite me.
- I can stay away from hungry wild animals.
- I can be careful not to frighten animals, so they don't bite me to protect themselves.
- I can live in a house and shut the door to keep animals out.

We and our ancestors have had to learn how to take care of ourselves by wearing protective clothing, lighting fires and building shelters - all sorts of ways - because we have skin and not bark to protect us from animals.



What about fungi?

Our skin protects us fairly well from fungi.

Sometimes we get a fungus called 'athletes' foot' growing between our toes.

All we have to do is keep the bits between our toes dry, then our skin will protect us from it.



What about insects?

Some insects can penetrate our skin. Mosquitoes and gnats do.

The bites hurt which prompts us to cover ourselves with clothes or rub our skin with smelly herbs or oils that insects don't like.



What about rot?

Our skin doesn't rot unless it is kept too moist and warm. That is why we keep ourselves reasonably clean and dry.

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What about rain?

Our skin does a good job of keeping the rain out.

As water on our skin evaporates, it takes heat from our skin so that we feel cold.

We like to be cooled when the weather is warm.

When the weather is cold, we need to dry ourselves and put on warm clothes.



What about heat?

Oils in our skin protect it from drying out in hot weather, but we know to sit in the shade or spread the right cream on our skin to protect it from too much sun.



What about fire?

Our skin is no good at protecting us from fire, but unlike a tree, we can move away from fire.



What about frost?

In extremely cold weather, we need warm clothing over our skin.



What about impact?

When we fall or bump into things, we get bruising under the skin.

Bruises ache but heal.

Sometimes when we fall on our bare hands or knees or elbows, our skin can get broken. We need to be get the wound clean and keep it keen so that the skin can heal.



Think about that! Our skin heals itself!

That is wonderful. How lucky we are.

Does bark heal itself?

It can do, if the wound is not too severe.

Some trees secrete resin to seal the wound and keep infection out.



How would you sum up?

Bark does a better job in protecting against most dangers.

However, our skin scores on elasticity, and its elasticity lets us move about so that we can avoid danger and invent other ways to protect ourselves – creams, clothes, houses.



I say, 'Our skin and a tree's bark each do a good job'.



Let's have a good look at the bark of different trees. [Bark rubbing](#) is good fun. And let's think about words to describe bark that we see: a Cub Scout came up with 'toast', a spot-on description of the texture of beech bark.

Each of the [Hello Trees books](#) describes the bark of a tree.

The [Hello Trees Lesson Plan for April](#) is all about bark.