

A River's Journey · Conversation & classroom guide

Learning with a grown-up · Ages 4–8 · Flexible participation

Which way does the water go? What helps you tell?

Learning aim: Trace downstream flow and distinguish source, tributary, bank, meander and mouth.

A five-minute conversation

Begin where the river starts. Move a finger or your gaze slowly along the water, letting your child choose where to pause.

Start here: Use 'begins,' 'joins' and 'bend' before introducing the formal words.

Explore further: Ask where a river mouth could be besides the sea, and why downhill does not mean south.

Which way does the water go? What helps you tell?

Answer cue: It travels downhill from the source toward the mouth. Follow the downstream arrows and the descending landscape.

What happens where the smaller stream meets the river?

Answer cue: The tributary joins the main river. Their water continues downstream together.

Can you find a bend and the land beside the water?

Answer cue: A bend is a meander. The land along a river's side is its bank, not the water itself.

Keep the idea clear

This example reaches the sea. Other rivers flow into lakes or other rivers. Rivers may be fed by rain, melting snow and groundwater, and flowing downhill does not mean always flowing south.

Try: Draw a joining river

Materials: Paper and a pencil or crayon.

1. Draw one winding river from high land to a lake or sea.
2. Add a smaller stream joining its side.
3. Add arrows showing the two streams joining and continuing downstream.

What this can show: Can the child show a joining tributary without tracing away from the main river? Use a drawing indoors; this activity does not require visiting water. If your family later visits water, an adult chooses a safe viewpoint and stays with the child.

Return to it: Point to the bank, then the water. Which one is land?

A River's Journey · In the classroom

A 20-minute classroom lesson

Prepare: Read the picture and answer cues. Have the optional explorer's notebook available. Paper and a pencil or crayon.

Words to explore

source — Where a river begins.

tributary — A stream or river that joins a larger one.

bank — The land along the side of a river.

meander — A bend in a river.

mouth — Where a river flows into another river, a lake or the sea.

3 min · Notice: Trace: follow the main river from its source to the sea.

4 min · Compare: Join: trace the tributary to its meeting point, then continue along the main river.

8 min · Try together: Draw one winding river from high land to a lake or sea. Add a smaller stream joining its side. Add arrows showing the two streams joining and continuing downstream.

5 min · Explain: Explain: invite children to describe one bend or one bank.

Understanding check: Can the child show a joining tributary without tracing away from the main river?

Answer guidance: It travels downhill from the source toward the mouth. Follow the downstream arrows and the descending landscape. The tributary joins the main river. Their water continues downstream together. A bend is a meander. The land along a river's side is its bank, not the water itself.

Use verbal path descriptions and a shared large print; tracing with gaze is as valid as moving a hand.

A response to keep

On notebook page 4, draw a river flowing from higher land to the sea, with a smaller stream joining it. Add a downstream arrow.

One clue I can explain now...

Something else I wonder...

<https://kiddos.ai/learn/olivia-the-globetrotter/river-journey>

Related story: Olivia the Globetrotter stories — In Olivia and Doudou in Paris, a boat trip introduces the Seine. This poster is an invented example river, not a map of the Seine or its source.

Our discovery record

Use words, marks, a drawing or an adult's notes. Keep this page with you; nothing needs to be uploaded.

Date / time (if useful): _____

My question or idea

What I noticed

What I think now

What I want to explore next

Stories to continue together: <https://kiddos.ai/books>

Kiddos Books on the App Store: <https://apps.apple.com/app/id6720721998>

Explore the available physical books: <https://www.amazon.com/author/kiddos-books>