



South Dakota
**GRASSLANDS
INITIATIVE**

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Grasslands Education Tote Overview

On behalf of the South Dakota Grasslands Initiative Education Workgroup, thank you for choosing to spend your time helping youth complete an introductory activity (or activities) to help them better understand and connect with the grassland ecosystem that is a core part of South Dakota. These activities have been selected and developed as hands-on activities that could be applicable to all ages and are most appropriate for early elementary. Below is a brief overview of the activities included in this tote and directions for preparing the kits to be returned.

If you would like help finding additional resources for grassland education or have questions or suggestions about any of the kits below, please email laura.grass@sdconservation.net, and you will be connected with a South Dakota Grasslands Initiative partner.

Activity Option: Web of Grassland Life

In this activity, each participant will represent a component of the grassland ecosystem. As the group discusses how plants and animals interact with and depend on each other, a rope will be passed between participants to develop a food web.

- **Time to Complete:** Approximately 20 minutes
- **Group Size:** Best with 12- 25 participants
- **Ideal Age:** 1st-10th grade. Ability to read or remember the plant or animal on their name tag.
- **Tote Refill:** Ensure the next group to use this tote has the materials needed. When returning this tote, please include a written note stating whether any materials need to be replaced.
- **When Complete:** Please put name tags in the bag, ensuring they aren't tangled. Put the rope back in the mesh bag.



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Activity Option: Critter Scene Investigations

Participants will use critical thinking skills and provided resource guides to evaluate clues at a recreated critter "crime" scene. Using the grassland location, plants, and animals at the scene, they will piece together a story of what happened.

- **Time to Complete:** Designed for a 45-minute period to have all participants rotate through stations independently. This can be reduced by using fewer crime scenes or working through them as a large group.
- **Ideal Age:** 2nd-6th grade. If students are working independently, they will need to be able to read the question worksheet and the names and information in the resource guides (designed to provide only a select few options to sort through).
- **Prep Time:** Plan for about 20 minutes to set up all 5 scenes.
- **Additional Materials Needed:** Please make copies of the worksheets you will need for your group.
- **Tote Refill:** Ensure the next group to use this tote has the materials needed. When returning this tote, please include a written note stating whether the provided clay needs to be replaced or if any reusable materials need replacing.
- **When Complete:** Please pack up each CSI station with their materials in the tote/bag they came in.

Activity Option: Grassland Mural Scavenger Hunt

The grasslands mural can be used with the scavenger hunt worksheet. Please make copies of the provided scavenger hunt worksheet for your participants to use.





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Activity Option: Plant Press

This kit contains directions for making plant presses for students. It is a great activity to encourage students to build a plant ID book of what they find or observe and learn the plants for a craft. Pressed wildflowers could be utilized for the tallgrass printmaking activity, especially with older participants. The materials are not included in this kit.

Activity Option: Tallgrass Printmaking

Youth will create a color print of one or more native grass species. By observing, tracing, and then printing the various grass seedheads and anatomy, students will develop skills in recognizing plant physiology and identifying these main tallgrass prairie species.

- **Time to Complete:** 20-45 minutes (if time allows, add an outdoor observation of a prairie prior to the activity)
- **Ideal Age:** 2nd-10th grade
- **Additional Materials Needed:** Table coverings to protect the table. Paper (cardstock is ideal) for printing the image. For plant tracing, images of 4 different plants have been provided, but you will need to make copies for each student to trace. If a grassland walk is part of your activity, students may choose to collect fresh plants to trace instead.
- **Tote Refill:** Ensure the next group to use this tote has the needed materials. When returning this tote, please include a written note of how many styrofoam trays were used, if any of the paint bottles are less than half full, and if any reusable materials (such as paint rollers) need replacing.
- **When Complete:** Wash out and dry paint rollers and replace items in their labeled bags or totes. Ensure you provide information on the refill sheet.
- **Helpful Link:** Watch 5.5 minute video: 'Styrofoam Print-making'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSgN-KCaISg>

Note: This activity came from the Flint Hills Discovery Center. Although designed in Kansas, the plants referenced in this activity are also common native grasses in South Dakota.