

## Variations on Cycles, Sizes, and Themes

Whether you are embarking on your first Wheel or continuing an ongoing practice of circular journaling, what is easy to notice is the seemingly endless variations for:

**The cycle of time you choose**—one day, one month, one year with or without moon phases, a lifetime, or a Wheel of your own design based on one of the blank templates.

**What size your Wheel will be**— From the digital PDF files, Wheels can be printed at any size that works for you. Some people prefer the 11” Wheels because they are compact and portable. These can be printed on 11x17 paper or cardstock and cut to square, or leave the extra room for “scratch paper” while working.

Others prefer a large format (24” or larger in diameter), especially when working in groups or when they have a place to post it for frequent use. This works especially well for keeping a “classroom Wheel” that can be added to throughout the year. Doing group Wheels as a class might be easier for younger students than doing an entire Wheel on their own.

### Types of Wheels—suggested uses

These are just some of the ways the wheels have been used by others, but feel free to create your own uses. See our [Gallery](#) for examples and inspiration!

Wheel of the Year (with or without moon phases):

- Phenology (life cycles in relation to natural events) in one place
- Life cycle of a species
- A year in the life of a tree
- A year of your life
- Ongoing monthly student observations in your school garden, forest, prairie, wetland, or school grounds. These could be kept individually or as an all-class project.

Wheels in Quarters:

- Four cardinal directions: North, South, East, West with your place or sit spot as center
- Four elements of a place: Earth, Air, Fire, Water
- Four senses of a place or experience
- Four seasons

Thirteen Moons Wheel:



- Moon names and themes of indigenous cultures
- Keeping a pictorial and written record of full moons throughout the year in your place
- Use with literature connections, such as *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back* or *Walk When the Moon is Full*

Wheel of a Lifetime:

- Reflection on phases of your own lifetime
- Interviews with elders or family members about their lifetimes
- Biographies of important people in history

Blank Wheels:

- Zoom in/Zoom out—a place as experienced observing far away up close
- Watersheds—body of water as center, with shoreline and surrounding land and its features circling around it
- Forests—ground layer as center, with layers up to canopy in concentric circles
- Reflection on Learning—main subject or unit as center, smaller concepts or lessons on outer rim, middle ring as integration of the two (see examples in [Gallery \[link\]](#))

### The Theme of your Wheel

There are endless possibilities for the central theme or subject of your wheel. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

**Phenology** the timing of natural events, such as when different flowers are in bloom or birds migrate

**One Kind of Animal or Plant-Life Cycle**

eggs→tadpoles→toads in a nearby pond

seed→seedling→vine→flower→seed for a morning glory

**Many Kinds of Animals or Plants** everything that visits your spot or is produced in your garden

**Sky** shapes of clouds, phases of the moon, stars in the night sky

**Holidays** celebrations of the seasons and your family's traditions

**Sounds** everything you can hear, reflective of the activity of people and creatures around your place

**Poems** write a line or haiku for each month, phase of the moon, or season

**An Eclectic Mix** of nature, social interactions, holidays, weather, etc.

**Project or Action Plans** “map out” plans for start and completion times for projects and use the wheel to



track your progress.

***Reflection Tools for Learning*** use wheels as a reflective journal throughout a class or workshop for yourself or your students

***Spiritual Growth/ Life Passages*** explore new perspectives revealed by cycles and seasons; celebrate healing characterize the major ‘eras’ of your life so far, or track the ‘firsts’ in the life of a newborn.

### **Resources:**

**These are just a few of the many additional resources out there to help get you started:**

UW-Arboretum Earth Partnership for Schools, K-12 Curriculum Guide and Woodland Curricular Sampler  
Developed and time-tested tested curriculum activities that use the Wheel of the Year and tie in to your school site (Single Spot Observations, Birthday Phenology, Wheelscapes)

#### Coyote’s Guide to Connecting with Nature

Great for understanding and tying in the natural learning cycles to your place, with some wonderful journaling activities too!

Young, Jon, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown. *Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature for Kids of All Ages and Their Mentors*. OWLLink Media, 2008.

#### Drawing Closer to Nature: Making Art in Dialogue with the Natural World

A great blend of holistic theory and hands-on practice...especially see the Encounters for guided activities based on elements, senses, and cardinal directions that would fit well with the Wheels in Quarters.

London, Peter. *Drawing closer to nature: Making art in dialogue with the natural world*. Shambhala Publications, 2003.

