

Grade Level

PreK – 2nd Grade

Duration

45min, 6 sessions

Activity Type

Dramatic Play

Animal Diversity

Goal:

To introduce students to animal classification and the specific characteristics that define different groups of animals.

Objectives:

1. To identify the different groups of animals: mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates.
2. To identify the specific characteristics that define different groups of animals.
3. To develop empathy towards animals.

Standards:

PK.AL.1: Actively engages in play as a means of exploration and learning.

K.SL.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse peers and adults in small and large groups and during play.

Materials:

Mammals

- Faux fur
- Animal ear headbands
- Animal snouts

Amphibians

- Flippers (webbed feet)
- Frog eye headbands
- Fruit leather or sticky hand “frog” tongues

Invertebrates

- Butterfly wings (or other insect wings)
- Antenna headbands
- Crab/lobster claw gloves
- Octopus tentacles

Birds

- Feather boas
- Bird wings
- Bird beaks

Fish

- Mermaid tails
- Shark fin headbands or back pieces
- Fish fin wristbands

All Animals

- Stuffed animals
- Face paint

Reptiles

- Faux leather
- Gloves with Velcro on the fingertips
- Snake sock puppets
- Cardboard turtle shell

Procedure:

Classroom Preparation

The set-up for your dramatic play area will depend on the goals for your class. In the materials list, we have recommendations for dress-up items based on the six major animal groups: mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates. You are free to choose one specific group to focus on, or if you want to introduce your students broadly to animal classification, you can do a different group each week. Use stuffed animals to introduce your students to the variety of animals in each category, especially if you do not have many dress-up items available. Face paint can also help supplement for items not available as a costume, such as mammal whiskers or fish gills.

Feel free to include supplemental materials to enhance your students' play. For example, if you are doing a unit on birds, you can add toy eggs or nestbuilding materials in addition to the costume items you already have. Be sure to have everything set-up before the students come to play in your classroom's dramatic play area.

Introduction

Tell your students that today they will be learning all about different types of animals. Ask the students to share out their favorite animals. Explain that there are lots of different animals in the world and that animals share similar traits that help us group them together. Here are introductions you can use for each animal group depending on your dramatic play set-up for the day:

Mammals

Mammals are animals that have fur. Mammals usually give live birth – unlike other animals who lay eggs, mammals carry their babies in their bellies. When those babies are born, they drink their mother's milk. Dogs, cats, and humans are mammals!

Birds

Birds are animals that have feathers and beaks. Birds lay eggs with hard shells in nests to keep them safe and warm. Ducks, owls, parrots, and penguins are all birds!

Reptiles

Reptiles are animals that have scales. They are cold-blooded, which means they need to bask in the sun to stay warm or hide in the shade to stay cool. Most reptiles lay eggs with soft, leathery shells. Turtles, snakes, lizards, and crocodiles are all reptiles!

Amphibians

Amphibians are animals with thin (and usually slimy) skin. They are cold-blooded, which means they need to bask in the sun to stay warm or hide in the shade to stay cool. Most amphibians live on both the land and in the water and have traits that help them survive in both environments. Frogs, newts, and salamanders are all amphibians!

Fish

Fish are animals that have gills that help them breathe underwater and fins to help them swim. Many fish are also covered in slippery scales. Goldfish, seahorses, eels, and sharks are all fish!

Invertebrates

Invertebrates are animals that do not have a backbone (also known as a spine). Most of the animals on earth are invertebrates! They include insects, jellyfish, snails, crabs, lobsters, octopi, and worms!

(Note: you may want to divide invertebrates into different groups, or only focus on a specific group, such as insects, mollusks, etc.)

After introducing your students to the animal group of the day, demonstrate how to safely play/use the items you have provided. See below for examples of play your students can engage in.

Animal Diversity

There are endless possibilities for different types of play. Your students can:

- Practice different animal movements, such as prowling like a lion, hopping like a rabbit, flapping their wings like a bird, or swimming like a fish
- Make different animal sounds, such as meowing like a cat, quacking like a duck, hissing like a snake, or buzzing like a bee
- Perform different animal behaviors, such as building a nest like a robin, hiding in their shell like a turtle or hermit crab, or burying acorns like a squirrel