

Grade 4 Animal World Classroom Activity

The Classroom Activity introduces students to the context of a performance task, so they are not disadvantaged in demonstrating the skills the task intends to assess. Contextual elements include:

- an understanding of the setting or situation in which the task is placed;
- potentially unfamiliar concepts that are associated with the scenario; and
- key terms or vocabulary students will need to understand in order to meaningfully engage with and complete the performance task.

The Classroom Activity is also intended to generate student interest in further exploration of the key idea(s). The Classroom Activity should be easy to implement with clear instructions.

Please read through the entire Classroom Activity before beginning the activity with students to ensure any classroom preparation can be completed in advance.

Throughout the activity, it is permissible to pause and ask students if they have any questions.

Resources Needed:

- Chart paper, white board, or chalkboard
- Marker or chalk
- Paper and pencil for each pair/group
 - Students who need an accommodation may use their preferred tool for writing.
- Some method of displaying ancillary materials¹

Learning Goals:

Students will understand the context of the key concepts related to the topic:

- Animal communication is important.
- Animals have basic needs that have to be met.
- Animals have special features.

Students will understand the key terms:

- **Communication:** the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to exchange information
- **Environment:** the place where a plant or animal lives that affects its ability to live
- **Ecosystem:** an area where plants, animals, and other nonliving things live and depend on each other
- **Feature:** an important part or ability

¹ Facilitators can decide whether they want to display ancillary materials using an overhead projector or computer/Smartboard, or whether they want to produce them as a handout for students.

Note: Definitions are provided here for the convenience of facilitators. Students are expected to understand these key terms in the context of the task, not memorize the definitions.

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[Purpose: The facilitator's goal is to help students understand what animals do to survive. The students will explore the ideas that animal communication, meeting their basic needs, and having special features are ways in which animals survive. This task will allow students to be active participants as they further explore the concept of animal survival.]

Note: The following section can be modified to accommodate various teacher-student interaction types such as a teacher-led discussion with the entire class, a teacher-student discussion for remote locations with a single student, or small groups.

[Divide students into groups of 3-4.]

Facilitator says: "Today, we will get ready for the Animal World Performance Task, which is about animals. Let's start by discussing what you know about what animals do to stay alive. You will have two minutes to discuss with your group what animals do to stay alive. I will write the discussion question on the chart paper/white board/chalk board."

[Have paper and pencils available for students to record their ideas if they wish.]

[Say the discussion question as you write it on the chart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard.]

Discussion question:

- What do animals do to stay alive?

[While students are discussing, say and write *How Animals Stay Alive* on the chart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard.]

Facilitator says: "When I call on your group, I want one person to share with the class what your group discussed. I will record your responses under the *How Animals Stay Alive* heading that I have written."

[Call on each group. Say and record student responses under *How Animals Stay Alive*.]

Possible student responses (unscripted):

- They hunt for food.

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- They find water to drink.
- They build or find homes to live in.
- They protect themselves from their enemies.

Facilitator says: “Great start. Now, we are going to further discuss how animals stay alive. I am going to list some ways that animals stay alive.”

[Say and write *Communication, Food, Shelter, and Features* on the chart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard.]

Facilitator says: “Let’s start with communication. To communicate means using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to exchange information. Let’s focus on animal communication. We know that most animals do not use words to communicate, but they do communicate. I am going to give you some examples of how certain animals communicate. If I call on you, share with the class what you think the animal is communicating.”

Facilitator says: “I am a bee that dances near a flower. What am I telling other bees when I dance?”

[Call on a student volunteer. Note: If students do not have a response, tell them the student response that is listed below.]

Possible student response (unscripted):

- Where to find food.

[Acknowledge other responses; ensure the students understand that bees dance to show where they have found food.]

Facilitator says: “I am an elephant that touches another elephant’s trunk with my trunk. What am I communicating to the other elephant?”

[Call on a student volunteer. Note: If students do not have a response, tell them the student response that is listed below.]

Possible student response (unscripted):

- The elephants are figuring out if they know another.

[Acknowledge other responses; ensure the students understand that elephants touch trunks as a way to identify one another.]

Facilitator says: “Some animals communicate by making certain movements. For example, some deer flick up their tails when they are frightened and gorillas stick out their tongues when they are angry. It is important that animals have a form of communication. This allows them to exchange information with their own species

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and other species. Due to their ability to communicate, animals are able to find food, express affection, and remain safe, which are all important.”

Note: Make sure students arrive at the common understanding that:

- Animal communication is important.

[Say and record the common understanding on the chart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard.]

Facilitator says: “We are now going to focus on some basic needs: food and shelter. An animal needs food and shelter in order to stay alive. Animals can eat meat, plants, or both plants and meat. The type of teeth that some animals have is often a clue to what it eats. When I call on you, share with the class what you know about an animal’s teeth being a clue to what it eats.”

[Call on a student volunteer. Note: If there are no student volunteers, share the possible student responses that are listed below.]

Possible student responses (*unscripted*):

- Sharp teeth are for gripping meat.
- Flat teeth are for grinding through tough plants.

[Acknowledge other responses; ensure the students understand that sharp teeth are used for gripping meat and flat teeth are for grinding through tough plant material.]

Note: For the following section, students may record their response on paper or use their preferred method of recording answers instead of using their thumb to respond.

Facilitator says: “I am going to read you an animal description. If you think the description describes an animal that eats only plants, hold your thumb toward the ceiling. If you think the description describes an animal that eats only meat, hold your thumb toward the floor. If you think the description describes an animal that eats both plants and meat, hold your thumb to either the left or right.”

[Write the following on the chart paper, whiteboard, or chalk board: *thumb up=plants only, thumb down=meat only, and thumb sideways=both plants and meat.*]

Note: For the following activity, correct misconceptions or incorrect responses by sharing the correct response with the students.

Facilitator says: “I am a leopard with many sharp teeth.”

Possible student response:

- Thumb toward the floor

Facilitator says: "I am a camel with large, flat teeth."

Possible student response:

- Thumb toward the ceiling

Facilitator says: "I am a bison, a type of cow, with large, flat teeth."

Possible student response:

- Thumb toward ceiling.

Facilitator says: "I am a black bear with a mix of sharp narrow teeth and large, flat teeth."

Possible student response:

- Thumb toward either the right or the left.

Facilitator says: "Let's move on to shelter. Animals live in places in nature that are best for them. For example, you would not find a polar bear living in a place where it is hot. The place where plants and animals live is called its environment. An animal's environment can have a big effect on the animal being able to live. There are different types of environments all around the world. You have two minutes to work with the people in your group to list the many different places in nature where animals live. For example, deserts or forests are examples of where animals live."

[Give students two minutes to discuss. Walk around to ensure that the students are on task.]

Facilitator says: "When I call on your group, someone should share one or two places that your group discussed."

[Call on each group. Record student responses on the chart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard under the *Shelter* heading.]

Possible student responses (*unscripted*):

- Oceans
- Caves
- Arctic
- Mountains
- Plains
- Grasslands

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Facilitator says: “As you can see from the list, animals live in many different places. An ecosystem is an area where living and nonliving things interact. In an ecosystem, the plants and animals depend on one another and on nonliving things to stay alive. Ecosystems are important because they provide animals with what they need in order to live.”

Note: Make sure students arrive at the common understanding that:

- Animals have basic needs that have to be met.

[Say and record the common understanding on the chart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard.]

Facilitator says: “Lastly, we are going to discuss the special features of some animals. An animal’s special features allow it to live in a particular place or situation. An example of one of these features is the webbed feet of a seagull.”

[Show **Figure 1: Webbed Feet**. Note: For students who are visually impaired, read the description below the photo.]

Facilitator says: “The webbed feet allow this seagull to swim more easily. They help push the seagull through the water.”

Facilitator says: “Animals have special features based on what is needed for them to live in their environment. A seagull spends most of its life in or near water. It has webbed feet that allow it to be able to easily swim. Discuss with the people in your group special features that other animals have.”

[Give students two minutes to discuss. Walk around to ensure that the students are on task.]

Facilitator says: “When I call on your group, choose someone from your group who will share an animal, the animal’s special feature, and how that feature helps the animal.”

[Call on each group.]

Possible student responses (unscripted):

- When a skunk feels threatened, it sprays a liquid that smells bad.
- The fur on some animals that live in areas where it snows a lot turns white in the winter.

Facilitator says: “Animals have developed many different features and this has allowed each species to continue to live.”

Note: Make sure students arrive at the common understanding that:

- Animals have special features.

Facilitator says: “In your performance task, you will be learning more about animals. The group work you did today should help prepare you for the research and writing you will be doing in the performance task.”

Note: Facilitator should collect student notes.

ANCILLARY MATERIAL

Figure 1
Webbed Feet



Picture Description: This picture shows the webbed feet of a seagull. Only the lower feathered part of its body and its two webbed feet can be seen. The feet are flat. On each foot, three clawed toes face forward and skin attaches them together, all the way to the claws. This makes the seagull's feet look like small paddles. Webbed feet help the seagull swim easily. On the back of each foot, there is one clawed toe. The bird is standing on a piece of wood with the ocean in the background.

Photograph of webbed feet (Image number 4029R-340754), copyright by SuperStock. Used by permission.