

Hamster Habitat Engineers: Building a Maze!

Focus: Learning about hamsters and applying Math, Art, Science, English, and PE skills to build a cardboard maze.

Lesson Activities:

1. Introduction & What Do Hamsters Need? (15 mins - Science, English)

- Begin by discussing hamsters. Use prompts: *What do you know about hamsters? What do you think they need to be happy and healthy?*
- Read a simple book or age-appropriate website section about hamster care together. Focus on shelter, food, water, and exercise needs.
- Discuss how mazes provide exercise and enrichment for hamsters.
- Brainstorm words to describe mazes (e.g., twisty, long, fun, tricky).

2. Maze Blueprint (15 mins - Math, Art)

- Explain that you'll design a maze for a real or imaginary hamster.
- On paper, sketch a simple maze design together using squares and rectangles.
- Discuss the different parts: entrance, exit, pathways, dead ends.
- Decide on the approximate size for sections of the maze (e.g., how wide or long should a tunnel be?). Measure sample lines on the paper with a ruler.

3. Maze Construction Zone (45-60 mins - Math, Art, PE)

- Gather cardboard boxes, tubes, scissors, tape, and decorating supplies.
- Measure the cardboard pieces according to the design, using a ruler. Mark the lines.
- Carefully cut the cardboard pieces (adult supervision/help needed). This involves physical coordination.
- Assemble the maze sections using tape. Make sure the tunnels connect. This requires moving, lifting light objects, and fine motor skills (taping).
- Decorate the maze using markers, crayons, or non-toxic paint. Be creative!

4. Hamster Olympics (15 mins - PE)

- While the maze paint/glue dries (if used), set up a simple, human-sized 'maze' or obstacle course in a room or yard using pillows, chairs, tunnels, etc.
- Have the student navigate the course, pretending to be a hamster exploring. Encourage different types of movement (crawling, weaving).

5. Maze Trials & Wrap-up (15 mins - Science, English)

- If you have a hamster and the maze is safe (no sharp edges, non-toxic materials, well-ventilated), supervise the hamster exploring its new maze for a short time. Observe its behaviour. ****Safety First! Never force the hamster.****
- If no hamster is available, discuss how a hamster *might* behave in the maze. Would it explore quickly? Would it sniff everything?
- Write or dictate 2-3 sentences about taking care of a hamster or about building the maze.
- Draw a picture of a hamster enjoying its habitat, including the newly built maze.
- Review what was learned about hamster needs and celebrate the finished maze.