

Squirrel Socialites: A Peek into Their Secret Lives!

Age Group: 10 years old (Sarah)

Subject: Science (Animal Behavior), Language Arts, Art

Time Allotment: 60-90 minutes

Hi Sarah! Meet Your Teacher's Guide!

Today, we're going on an exciting adventure to uncover the secret social lives of those bushy-tailed acrobats we see in our backyards and parks – squirrels! Get ready to become a squirrel behavior detective!

Learning Goals (What You'll Be Able to Do!):

- Spot and describe different ways squirrels "talk" and act with each other.
- Understand why squirrels might be chasing each other or making funny noises.
- Create an awesome story or comic about squirrels and their social adventures!

Materials You'll Need:

- Computer or tablet with internet access
- Paper
- Pencils, crayons, or markers
- Optional: Your "Field Notes" notebook
- Optional: Binoculars (if you plan to do some live squirrel watching later!)

Lesson Adventure Plan:

Part 1: Squirrel Secrets Unveiled! (15-20 minutes)

Activity: Brainstorm & Video Exploration

Let's start by thinking about what we already know or guess about squirrels. What do you think squirrels do when they meet other squirrels, Sarah?

Now, let's watch some short video clips of squirrels interacting. As we watch, try to notice:

- **Tail Talk:** What are their tails doing? (Flicking, puffed up? This is a big way they communicate!)
- **Chatterbox Squirrels:** What sounds do they make? (Chirps, barks, chatter? These can mean different things!)
- **Action Time:** Are they chasing each other? Sharing food (rarely!)? Grooming? Fighting? Playing?

(Teacher Note: Prepare 2-3 short, vetted YouTube clips showcasing different squirrel interactions such as play, territorial disputes, and communication like tail flicks or vocalizations.)

Discussion: After each clip, let's talk about what we saw. What do you think was happening? Why might the squirrels be behaving that way?

Key Squirrel Social Behaviors to look for:

- **Chasing:** Can be playful, for mating, or to defend territory/food.
- **Tail Flicking/Waving:** Often a sign of agitation, warning, or excitement.
- **Vocalizations (Chirps, Barks, Screams):** Used as alarms, mating calls, or signs of aggression.
- **Scent Marking:** Rubbing their cheeks or bodies on branches to leave their smell (like a "keep out" sign or "I was here!").
- **Nesting Together (in winter):** Sometimes done for warmth, especially among related squirrels.
- **Fighting:** Usually over food or territory.

Part 2: Become a Squirrel Storyteller! (30-40 minutes)

Activity: Create a Squirrel Social Scene

Now that you're a squirrel behavior expert, it's time to get creative! Sarah, I want you to create a short story or a comic strip about squirrels having a social interaction.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it:

1. Choose at least **two** different social behaviors we learned about (like tail flicking and chasing, or vocalizations and sharing a space nervously).
2. Show these behaviors in your story or comic.
3. Think about *why* your squirrels are interacting. Are they friends? Rivals? Is one trying to impress the other?

You can draw pictures, write a story, or make a comic with speech bubbles. Have fun with it and let your imagination run wild... like a squirrel in a tree!

(Teacher Note: Offer prompts if Sarah needs help getting started, e.g., "Imagine two squirrels meet at a bird feeder. What happens next?" or "A new squirrel moves into the neighborhood. How do the other squirrels react?")

Part 3: Show and Tell & Squirrel Smarts (10-15 minutes)

Activity: Share Your Creation & Wrap-up

Sarah, I'd love to see or hear your squirrel story/comic! As you share, tell me about the social behaviors you included and why your squirrels were acting that way.

Let's recap our squirrel smarts:

- What are two new things you learned about how squirrels communicate or interact?
- Why is it important for squirrels to have these social behaviors? (Think about survival, finding mates, protecting their food or homes.)

Great job today, Squirrel Detective Sarah! You've done an amazing job exploring the social world of squirrels!

Extension Ideas (For More Squirrel Fun!):

- **Real-Life Squirrel Watching:** If you have squirrels nearby, spend some time (safely from a distance) observing them. Use your "Field Notes" notebook to jot down or sketch any social behaviors you see. Can you identify what they're doing based on what we learned?
- **Build a Squirrel Feeder:** Research and (with help) build a simple squirrel feeder to attract

squirrels for easier observation. (Make sure it's okay with your family and doesn't attract unwanted pests!)

- **Squirrel Diary:** Imagine you ARE a squirrel. Write a diary entry about your day and the other squirrels you met.