

# Aria's Awesome African Safari: Dream Habitat Designer!

## Materials You'll Need:

- Internet access (for research)
- Notebook or paper
- Pencils, pens, markers, or coloring pencils
- Optional: Shoebox, cardboard, craft sticks, clay, natural items (twigs, leaves, small stones) for building a 3D model
- Optional: Computer for digital design (e.g., simple drawing program or presentation software)

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## Welcome, Junior Zoologist Aria!

Today, you're embarking on an exciting virtual safari adventure! Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to become an expert on some amazing African animals and then design a perfect, enriching habitat for one of them. Are you ready to explore the wild world of zoology?

### Part 1: Safari Researcher

Every great zoologist starts with research! Your first task is to learn about the incredible animals of the African savanna.

1. **Choose Your Animals:** Select 3 to 5 different African safari animals that pique your interest. Some ideas include: Lion, Elephant, Giraffe, Zebra, Cheetah, Rhinoceros, Hippopotamus, Leopard, African Wild Dog, Meerkat, or any other safari animal you like!
2. **Gather Your Intel:** For each animal you choose, find out the following information. Jot it down in your notebook:
  - **Common Name & Scientific Name** (if you can find it!)
  - **Natural Habitat:** Where does it live in Africa? (e.g., grassland, woodland, riverine)
  - **Diet:** What does it eat? Is it a herbivore, carnivore, or omnivore?
  - **Physical Adaptations:** What special features help it survive? (e.g., long neck, camouflage, sharp claws)
  - **Social Behavior:** Does it live alone, in pairs, small groups, or large herds?
  - **Predators & Threats:** What other animals prey on it? What are the main threats to its survival in the wild (e.g., habitat loss, poaching)?
  - **One Super Cool Fact:** Something that really fascinates you about this animal!
3. **Recommended Research Spots (ask a grown-up for help if needed):**
  - National Geographic Kids
  - WWF (World Wildlife Fund)
  - San Diego Zoo Wildlife Explorers
  - Britannica Kids
  - Your local library's online resources

### Part 2: Dream Habitat Designer

Fantastic research, Aria! Now it's time to get creative. Choose **ONE** animal from your research that you connected with the most.

Your challenge is to design an ideal habitat for this animal. Imagine you're creating a space for it in a world-class conservation center or wildlife reserve that wants to provide the best possible care and allow the animal to behave as naturally as possible.

**Think like a zoologist! Your habitat design must consider:**

- **Space & Terrain:** How much room does it need? Does it need areas to run, climb, swim, bask, or hide? What kind of ground cover is best (sand, grass, rocks)?
- **Shelter:** What kind of shelter does it need from the sun, rain, wind, or to feel secure? (e.g., caves, dense bushes, large trees, burrows)
- **Food & Water:** How will food be provided in a way that mimics its natural foraging or hunting behavior? Where will it find fresh water?
- **Enrichment:** This is super important! What elements can you include to keep the animal mentally stimulated, physically active, and encourage its natural behaviors? (e.g., puzzle feeders, scratching posts, mud wallows, climbing structures, safe 'prey' items to chase, social opportunities with its own kind if it's a social animal)
- **Climate Control (if applicable):** Does it need specific temperature or humidity ranges? (Though for African safari animals, an outdoor-focused enclosure is often key).
- **Safety:** How will the habitat keep the animal safe, and also keep any observers safe?
- **Native Plants:** What types of plants from its natural environment could be included (that are safe for the animal)?

### How to Present Your Design (Choose one or combine ideas!):

- **Detailed Drawing/Painting:** Create a colorful illustration of your habitat. Add labels to point out key features and explain their purpose.
- **3D Model:** Use a shoebox, cardboard, craft supplies, LEGOs, clay, or natural materials (twigs, leaves, stones) to build a model of your habitat.
- **Digital Design:** Use a simple drawing program on a computer/tablet, or create a slideshow presentation with images and descriptions.
- **Blueprint & Written Description:** Draw a 'blueprint' (a top-down view or side view) of the habitat and write a detailed description explaining all its features and why they are important for your chosen animal.

### Part 3: Safari Guide Showcase

You've done the research, you've designed an amazing habitat – now it's time to show it off!

Prepare a short presentation (2-5 minutes) as if you are a Safari Guide or Zoo Director unveiling this new, state-of-the-art habitat. In your presentation, be sure to:

1. Introduce the animal your habitat is for.
2. Showcase your design (your drawing, model, digital design, etc.).
3. Explain *why* you included certain features, linking them back to your research on the animal's needs (diet, behavior, adaptations).
4. Highlight how your habitat provides enrichment and allows for natural behaviors.
5. Share that one super cool fact about your animal!

You can present this to a family member, or even record yourself!

### Part 4: Zoologist's Reflection

Let's think a bit more deeply about what you've learned:

- Why is it so important for conservation centers and ethical zoos to create habitats that closely mimic an animal's natural environment and cater to its psychological needs?
- What do you think are some of the biggest challenges in creating these kinds of habitats for large or complex animals?
- How can understanding animal needs (like the ones you researched) help with conservation efforts for animals in the wild?
- If you were leading a real photo safari in Africa, what's one important rule you would tell your guests to ensure they are respectful of the wildlife and their homes?

Discuss these questions with a family member, or write down your thoughts.

**Congratulations, Aria!**

You've shown incredible creativity, research skills, and a deep understanding of animal welfare. You'd make a fantastic zoologist or habitat designer! Keep exploring the amazing world of animals!