

Ashley's Giant Otter Adventure: Designing a River Haven!

Materials You'll Need, Ashley:

- Computer or tablet with internet access (for videos and research)
- Notebook or paper for notes
- Pencils, pens, colored pencils, markers, or crayons
- Large sheet of paper, cardboard, or a shoebox/diorama materials (e.g., clay, craft sticks, blue paper for water, green for vegetation - for the habitat design)
- Optional: building blocks (like LEGOs) for habitat model
- Printer (optional, for printing reference images or fact sheets)

Welcome to the Amazing World of Giant Otters!

Get ready for an exciting journey into the Amazon rainforest to meet one of its most charismatic and fascinating residents: the Giant Otter! These aren't your everyday otters; they are the "river wolves" of South America. Today, we're not just going to learn about them; you're going to become an otter expert and a habitat designer!

Part 1: Otter Investigators! (Approx. 45-60 minutes)

Let's start by becoming Giant Otter detectives. Our mission is to find out what makes them so special.

1. Meet the Giants:

Watch a couple of short, engaging videos about Giant Otters. (Parent/Guardian: Please help Ashley find safe, age-appropriate videos on YouTube or nature documentary sites. Search for "Giant Otter facts for kids," "Giant Otter playing," or "Giant Otter family.")

As you watch, try to jot down in your notebook answers to these questions:

- What do Giant Otters look like? (Size, color, special features)
- Where do they live? What is their habitat like?
- What do they eat? How do they catch their food?
- Are they lonely animals, or do they live with others?
- What sounds do they make?

2. Fact File Fun:

After watching the videos, let's make a quick "Giant Otter Fact File" in your notebook. Based on your notes, write down:

- **Three Unique Features:** What makes them stand out? (e.g., their throat markings, their size, their vocalizations)
- **Habitat Needs:** What are the most important things they need in their environment to survive and be happy? (e.g., clean water, plenty of fish, safe places for dens)
- **Social Life Sketch:** Draw a quick picture or write a sentence about how Giant Otters live together.

3. Discussion Break: Talk with your parent/guardian about what you've learned. What did you

find most surprising or interesting about Giant Otters? How do their features help them live in the Amazon?

Part 2: River Haven Designer! (Approx. 60-90 minutes)

Now for the really creative part! Imagine you're an ecologist and park designer tasked with creating the perfect, safe, and enriching habitat for a family of Giant Otters. This could be in a protected area of the Amazon or even a very special wildlife park.

Your Challenge: Design this "River Haven" for Giant Otters!

You can choose how to present your design:

- **A detailed drawing or painting** on a large sheet of paper.
- **A 3D model** using a shoebox (diorama), cardboard, clay, craft sticks, LEGOs, or other craft supplies.

Things to include and think about for your design:

- **Water Source:** A river or lake area. Is the water clean? Are there shallow parts and deeper parts?
- **Food Supply:** Where will the otters find fish? Are there specific types of fish they like?
- **Den Sites:** Where will the otters sleep and raise their pups? Giant Otters dig dens in riverbanks or use fallen logs. Make sure they are safe from predators and floods.
- **"Campsites":** Otters clear areas along the riverbank for resting, grooming, and scent-marking.
- **Play Areas:** Otters are playful! What features would make it fun for them? (e.g., smooth rocks to slide on, logs to climb)
- **Safety:** How will your haven protect the otters from dangers (like pollution, predators, or human disturbance)?
- **Enrichment:** What else could you add to make their lives interesting and allow them to behave naturally?

Label the different parts of your haven design. Be ready to explain why you included each feature and how it benefits the Giant Otters.

Part 3: Otter Advocates! (Approx. 20-30 minutes)

Giant Otters are amazing, but they face some challenges in the wild, such as habitat loss and pollution. They are an endangered species.

1. **Think & Discuss:** Based on what you've learned, what do you think is the biggest threat to Giant Otters?
2. **Creative Conservation Idea:** If you wanted to help people learn about Giant Otters and the importance of protecting them, what's one creative thing you could do? (Examples: Write a short story or poem about a Giant Otter, create a poster, design a small comic strip, or even think of a catchy slogan.)
3. **Share your idea!** Explain it to your parent/guardian.

Wrap-up: Show and Tell!

It's time to present your incredible "River Haven" design! Walk your parent/guardian through your drawing or model. Explain:

- The different features you included.
- Why each feature is important for the Giant Otters.
- What you learned about Giant Otters that helped you design it.

Also, share your conservation idea from Part 3.

Congratulations, Ashley! You've become a Giant Otter expert, a creative habitat designer, and an otter advocate today. You've used your creativity and what you've learned to think like a scientist and a conservationist!