

Design Your Dream Pet Paradise!

Materials Needed:

- Paper, pencils, colored pencils/markers OR
- Cardboard, craft supplies (glue, scissors, tape, fabric scraps, recycled materials) for model building OR
- Computer with internet access and optionally, presentation software or simple design software.
- Access to online resources (e.g., ASPCA, Humane Society, specific animal care websites) for research.

Lesson Goal:

Today, you're going to become an animal care innovator! You'll choose an animal you're passionate about, research its needs, and then design an amazing habitat or a unique enrichment item that would make its life super happy and healthy. This is all about applying what you learn and getting creative!

Introduction: What Makes an Animal Happy? (Approx. 15 minutes)

Think about your favorite animal, or a pet you know. What do you think it needs to be truly happy and healthy, beyond just food and water? We're not just talking about survival, but about thriving! Discuss or jot down a few ideas about what "animal well-being" means to you.

All animals have basic needs, often called the "Five Freedoms" or similar concepts in animal welfare. These generally include freedom from hunger and thirst; freedom from discomfort; freedom from pain, injury, or disease; freedom to express normal behavior; and freedom from fear and distress. Your design will aim to support these freedoms in a creative way!

Part 1: Choose Your Animal & Basic Needs Research (Approx. 45-60 minutes)

1. **Pick Your Pal:** Choose a specific type of animal you'd like to focus on. It could be a common pet (dog, cat, hamster, fish), a farm animal, or even a wild animal (though for wild animals, think about a sanctuary or rehabilitation setting). The more specific you are (e.g., "Siamese Cat" instead of just "Cat"), the better you can tailor your design.
2. **Become an Expert:** Using reliable online resources (like veterinary sites, ASPCA, Humane Society, zoo websites, or breed-specific clubs), research the following for your chosen animal:
 - **Basic Needs:** What are its specific dietary needs? What kind of shelter does it require (temperature, space, bedding)? What are its social needs (solitary, pairs, groups)? What are common health concerns to be mindful of?
 - **Natural Behaviors:** What does this animal do in the wild, or what are its instinctual behaviors? (e.g., burrowing, climbing, scratching, foraging, playing, hunting, perching).
3. **Summarize Your Findings:** Briefly write down the key points of your research. This will be your guide for the design phase.

Part 2: Dive into Enrichment! (Approx. 30-45 minutes)

Enrichment is all about providing animals with stimulating environments and activities that encourage natural behaviors, prevent boredom, and improve their overall well-being. Based on your

research into your animal's natural behaviors, brainstorm at least three specific types of enrichment that would benefit it. Think about:

- **Sensory Enrichment:** Things to see, smell, hear, touch (e.g., different textures, sounds, scents).
- **Physical Enrichment:** Things that encourage exercise and movement (e.g., climbing structures, toys to chase, puzzle feeders).
- **Cognitive Enrichment:** Things that provide mental stimulation (e.g., puzzle toys, training, opportunities to make choices).
- **Social Enrichment:** Appropriate interaction with other animals or humans.
- **Food-Based Enrichment:** Making mealtime more engaging than just eating from a bowl (e.g., hiding food, using puzzle feeders).

For example, if you chose a cat, enrichment could include a tall cat tree (physical, sensory), puzzle feeders (food-based, cognitive), and interactive wand toys (social, physical).

Part 3: Design Your Pawsitive Pet Paradise! (Approx. 60-90 minutes)

Now for the creative part! You're going to design ONE of the following for your chosen animal:

- **A Dream Habitat:** This could be an ideal enclosure, room, or outdoor space. Think beyond a basic cage or kennel. How can you make it perfectly suited to your animal's needs and enrichment?
- **An Innovative Enrichment Item:** This could be a unique toy, a puzzle feeder, a climbing structure, or something entirely new that you invent to stimulate your animal.

Your Design Process:

1. **Brainstorm & Sketch:** Start by sketching out a few rough ideas. Don't worry about perfection at this stage.
2. **Choose Your Best Idea:** Select the design you think best meets the animal's needs and is the most creative.
3. **Create Your Design:** Now, bring your idea to life! You can:
 - **Draw it:** Create a detailed drawing or blueprint. Label the different parts and explain their purpose. Use color!
 - **Build a Model:** Use craft supplies to build a 3D model.
 - **Digital Design:** Use presentation software (like Google Slides or PowerPoint) or a simple design tool to create a visual representation of your design.
4. **Annotate Your Design:** Clearly label the features of your habitat or enrichment item. For each feature, explain:
 - What specific need (basic or enrichment) does it address?
 - How does it encourage natural behaviors?
 - What makes it safe and suitable for the animal?
 - What makes your design innovative or special?

Think creatively! What materials would you use? How would it be constructed? How would the animal interact with it? What makes your design better or different from what's already available?

Part 4: Present Your Paradise! (Approx. 15-30 minutes)

Share your design! Explain:

- The animal you chose and its key needs.
- Your design (show your drawing, model, or digital creation).

- How your design specifically addresses the animal's basic needs and promotes its well-being through enrichment.
- What you think is the most innovative or important feature of your design and why.

This can be an informal presentation to a parent or guardian, or you could even record a short video!

Extension Ideas (Optional):

- **Budgeting:** Estimate the cost of building your design. What materials are affordable and safe?
- **"Shark Tank" Pitch:** Prepare a persuasive pitch for your innovative animal product.
- **Community Impact:** How could your design ideas be used in a local animal shelter or rescue organization? Could you volunteer to help build enrichment items?
- **Further Research:** Explore careers in animal care that involve design or behavior, like zoo exhibit designer, animal behaviorist, or veterinary specialist.

Reflection Questions:

- What was the most challenging part of this project?
- What did you learn about your chosen animal that surprised you?
- How did considering the animal's perspective influence your design choices?
- If you could actually build your design, what would be the first step?