

Wild Animal Habitat Adventure

Materials Needed

- A collection of small toy wild animals (e.g., lion, monkey, penguin, fish, camel, bear).
- An empty shoebox or cardboard box.
- Craft supplies: construction paper (blue, green, brown, white), cotton balls, glue or a glue stick, safety scissors, crayons or markers.
- Natural materials (optional, from a backyard walk): small twigs, leaves, pebbles, sand.
- Picture cards or a simple book showing different habitats (jungle, ocean, arctic, desert).

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Identify at least three different wild animals and name their habitat (e.g., "A fish lives in the ocean.").
- Sort toy animals into groups based on their habitat.
- Construct a simple model of one animal habitat using various craft materials.
- Describe their creation, explaining why they chose certain materials for their habitat.

Lesson Activities

Part 1: Safari Warm-Up (5-10 minutes)

Goal: To spark curiosity and introduce the concept of animal homes.

1. **Go on an "Animal Hunt":** Hide the toy wild animals around the room. Say, "We're going on a safari! Can you help me find all the wild animals that are hiding?"
2. **Gather and Greet:** As the student finds each animal, name it together. Ask a simple, engaging question: "What sound does a lion make?" or "Where do you think a monkey likes to sleep?" This gets them thinking about where animals live.
3. **Introduce "Habitat":** Explain that the special home where an animal lives is called its "habitat." A habitat gives an animal everything it needs: food, water, and a safe place to live.

Part 2: Habitat Sort (10 minutes)

Goal: To practice classifying animals by their environment.

1. **Set Up the Habitats:** Lay out different colored sheets of construction paper to represent different habitats. For example:
 - **Blue Paper:** Ocean/Water
 - **Green Paper:** Jungle/Forest
 - **White Paper:** Arctic/Snow
 - **Brown or Yellow Paper:** Desert/Savannah
2. **Sort the Animals:** Hand the student one animal toy at a time. Ask, "Where does the penguin live? Does it live where it's hot and sandy or where it's cold and snowy?" Guide them to place the animal on the correct colored paper.
3. **Talk It Out:** Discuss why each animal belongs in its habitat. For example, "Yes, the fish goes on the blue paper because it needs water to swim and breathe!"

Part 3: Build-a-Habitat Diorama (15-20 minutes)

Goal: To creatively apply knowledge by constructing a physical habitat.

1. **Choose an Animal:** Ask the student to choose their favorite animal from the collection. Ask, "Which habitat will you build for your animal?"
2. **Gather Supplies:** Place the shoebox and all the craft supplies in the middle of your workspace. Let the student lead the creative process. Ask guiding questions instead of giving direct instructions:
 - "What does your monkey need in its jungle home? Does it need trees to climb?" (Use twigs or rolled-up brown paper).
 - "What color is the water in the ocean for your fish?" (Use blue paper or blue crayon).
 - "How can we make snow for your polar bear?" (Use cotton balls).
3. **Create and Construct:** Help with any cutting or difficult gluing, but encourage the student to make the creative decisions and do the placing, coloring, and gluing themselves. This is their chance to build the world they imagine for their animal.

Part 4: Safari Show and Tell (5 minutes)

Goal: To assess understanding and give the student a chance to share their work proudly.

1. **Present the Habitat:** Place the chosen animal inside the finished shoebox diorama.
2. **Ask for a Tour:** Say, "Tell me all about the home you built for your animal!" Ask open-ended questions like:
 - "What is this part you made here?"
 - "Why did you add leaves?"
 - "Is your animal happy in its new home? Why?"
3. **Celebrate the Work:** Praise their creativity and effort. Display the diorama proudly in your homeschool space.

Differentiation

- **For Extra Support:** Pre-cut some basic shapes (e.g., green leaf shapes, blue waves) to help with fine motor challenges. Focus on building just one key feature, like using cotton balls for snow, rather than a complex scene.
- **For an Extension Challenge:** Encourage the student to add more than one animal to the habitat (as long as they belong together). Ask them to add a food source for the animal (e.g., drawing small fish for the penguin or making a berry bush for the bear). They could also try writing the first letter of the animal's name on a small flag for the diorama.

Checking for Understanding

You can see if the learning objectives were met by observing:

- Can the student correctly place most animals on the correct habitat mat during the sorting game?
- During the diorama creation, does the student choose materials that logically represent elements of that habitat (e.g., blue for water, green for trees/grass)?
- In the "Show and Tell," can the student explain their creation using habitat vocabulary (e.g., "This is the snow for my bear," or "The monkey climbs this tree.")?