

Introduction: Animal Explorers!

Welcome, little explorer! Today we're going on an adventure to learn about some amazing animals! Animals live all around us - some fly, some swim, and some walk on land. Let's see which ones we can learn about today using our special cards.

Activity: Matching Animal Friends

Let's lay out our special work mat. This is our space for learning about animals.

1. **Meet the Animals (Control Cards):** Let's look at these cards first. They have a picture and the animal's name. *(Lay out 3-5 control cards - picture with label attached. Point to each one.)* "This is a **dog**." *(Say the name clearly.)* "This is a **cat**." "This is a **bird**." *(Encourage the child to repeat the names.)*
2. **Picture Match Fun (Picture Cards):** Now, look at these cards. They only have pictures. Can you find the picture card that looks exactly like this dog card? *(Hand the child the picture card of the dog. Guide them to place it below the matching control card.)* Great job! Let's match the cat picture. Now the bird picture! *(Continue until all picture cards are matched to the control cards.)*
3. **Word Detective (Label Cards - Optional/Introduction):** Look! These little cards just have words. This word says "dog". Can you find the picture of the dog and place this word underneath it? *(Place the label card under the matching picture card. For preschoolers, focus on visual matching of the label to the label on the control card, rather than reading.)* Let's try matching the word "cat"! *(Assist as needed. This introduces the concept that printed words represent spoken words and objects.)*
4. **Explore and Play:** Now you can try matching the cards all by yourself! You can mix them up and match them again. *(Optional: If using animal figurines, the child can match the figurine to the correct picture/control card.)*

Closure: Animal Parade!

Wow, you did such a great job matching our animal friends! Can you tell me the name of this animal? *(Point to one card.)* And this one? Fantastic! Let's sing a quick song about one of the animals we learned, like 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm' or 'B-I-N-G-O'. Now, let's carefully put our animal cards back in their special place. Thank you for exploring animals with me!