

Animal Investigators: Habitats & Homes

Grade Level: 3rd Grade

Subject: Science (Environmental Science)

Time Allotment: 60-90 minutes

Lesson Procedure:

1. Introduction: What Do Animals Need? (10 mins)

- Ask the student: "Think about your favorite animal! Where does it live? What do you think it needs every day to be happy and healthy?"
- Discuss their ideas. Introduce the concept that just like humans, animals have basic needs to survive.
- Explain the four main needs: Food (what they eat), Water (what they drink), Shelter (a safe place to live and rest), and Space (enough room to move, hunt, and hide). Write these down.

2. Exploring Habitats (15 mins)

- Define "Habitat": Explain that a habitat is the natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism. It's the place where an animal finds all the things it needs to live (food, water, shelter, space).
- Show pictures (or use books/websites) of different habitats like a forest, desert, ocean, jungle, arctic tundra, or grassland.
- For each habitat, discuss: What kind of animals might live here? What would they eat? Where would they find water? What kind of shelter is available? Is there lots of space or only a little? (Example: A polar bear lives in the Arctic. It needs ice (shelter/space), eats seals (food), and gets water from snow/ice or its food.)

3. Activity: Build-a-Habitat! (25-35 mins)

- Tell the student they get to be an architect for an animal!
- Have the student choose an animal they find interesting.
- Using the shoebox, construction paper, natural materials (leaves, twigs, pebbles), crayons/markers, scissors, and glue, the student will create a model habitat for their chosen animal.
- Guide them to think about: What does this animal eat? How can you show its food source in the box? Where does it get water? How can you represent that? What does its shelter look like (a cave, a nest, underground)? How can you build or draw that? Does it need lots of open space or a cozy den?
- Encourage creativity! They can draw the animal inside its habitat or use a small toy animal if available.

4. Habitat Helpers (5-10 mins)

- Briefly discuss how habitats can change. Ask: "What might happen to the animals if their forest home had a big fire?" or "What if people built lots of houses where the deer used to find food?"
 - Explain that sometimes animals lose their homes, which makes it hard for them to find their
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needs. Mention that environmental scientists study how to protect habitats and help animals.

5. Conclusion & Share (5-10 mins)

- Have the student present their shoebox habitat.
- Ask them to point out how the habitat provides food, water, shelter, and space for their chosen animal.
- Review the four basic needs one last time. Ask: "What was the most interesting habitat you learned about today?"

Differentiation/Extension:

- **Support:** Provide pre-cut shapes or more guidance during the habitat building. Focus on just one or two animal needs if four is overwhelming. Use simpler habitat examples.
- **Challenge:** Have the student research an animal and its specific habitat needs more deeply. Ask them to write a short paragraph describing how their animal survives in its habitat or how a specific environmental change might impact it. Compare/contrast two different habitats.