

Nest Builders: Amazing Avian Architects!

Let's explore the wonderful world of bird homes!

Introduction (10 mins)

Ask your student: Where do birds live? Have you ever seen a bird's nest? What do you think nests are for? Read a picture book about birds and nests. Discuss how our homes protect us and provide a place for families, just like nests do for birds.

Why Build a Nest? (10 mins)

Talk about the main reasons birds build nests:

- **Safety for Eggs:** Nests keep fragile eggs from rolling away or breaking.
- **Raising Chicks:** They provide a safe, warm place for baby birds (chicks) to grow.
- **Protection:** Nests help hide eggs and chicks from predators (animals that might eat them).
- **Shelter:** They offer some protection from rain, wind, and cold.

Show pictures of different predators or weather conditions to illustrate the need for protection.

Nest Materials & Types (15 mins)

Discuss what birds use to build nests. Look at the collected natural materials (twigs, grass, leaves, mud). Talk about how birds also sometimes use things humans leave behind (yarn, paper, string - discuss responsible disposal of trash!). Show pictures of different nest types (cup nests like robins, platform nests like eagles, cavity nests in trees like woodpeckers, hanging pendant nests like orioles). Emphasize that the type of nest and materials used often depends on the bird species and where it lives.

Optional Activity: If weather permits and it's safe, take a short walk outside with binoculars. Look for birds and see if you can spot any nests (remind the student never to touch or disturb real nests, especially if birds might be using them!).

Activity: Build Your Own Nest! (20-25 mins)

Set out all the collected natural and craft materials. Give the student the bowl/cup to use as a base or mold.

Instructions:

1. Start by weaving or layering some of the sturdier materials (like twigs or firmer grasses) around the inside or outside of the base/mold to create a structure.
2. Fill in gaps with softer materials like leaves, moss, or shredded paper.
3. Add soft lining materials like cotton balls, soft grass, or yarn scraps to the inside, making it cozy for pretend eggs/chicks.
4. If using mud or playdough, use small amounts to help stick materials together (like some birds do!).
5. Encourage creativity! Let the student decide which materials work best. They can remove the nest from the mold if it's sturdy enough, or leave it in.

Wrap-up & Review (10 mins)

Admire the nest! Ask the student:

- What materials did you choose for the outside? Why? (Strength?)
- What did you use for the inside lining? Why? (Softness?)
- What was the trickiest part of building your nest?
- Why is it important for a nest to be strong and soft?

Review the main reasons birds build nests. Ask the student to draw a picture of their favorite type of bird nest (real or their own model) and label some of the materials used.