

During Your Visit: Enrichment Search

Activity Overview

In this activity, students will use their observation skills to determine what type of enrichment the animals were given by the zoo keeper that day. Enrichment is something that keepers provide for the animals to keep them active and interested in their environments, such as unique food presentation, scents, or toys.

Objective

Students will record examples of enrichment they observe during their visit.

Materials

- Copies of Enrichment Search Data Sheet
- Pencils
- Clipboards (optional)

Inquiry Connection

- Making observations
- Proposing answers, explanations, and predictions
- Communicating results

Procedure

Before arriving at the zoo, introduce your students to the concept of enrichment as well as the types of enrichment that they may see. Upon arrival at the zoo, explain to your students that they will be using careful observation skills to identify examples of enrichment within the animal habitats. To record their observations, provide each student with a data sheet.

Because not all exhibits will have obvious or even visible enrichment components, provide students with the opportunity to visit a number of exhibits throughout the zoo. Also remind them that some enrichment items, such as scent, may not be apparent to us. Encourage them to observe animal behavior as an indicator that enrichment might be present.

Back in the classroom, tie the enrichment observations back to personally relevant topics. You might encourage them to discuss what they do in their own lives for enrichment, such as play a sport or visit with friends. You might also want to discuss providing enrichment for pets, such as toys or scratching posts.

Modifications for Younger Students

For younger students not yet able to write their observations, you can modify the data sheet so students can draw pictures of the enrichment they see.

Extensions

Students can develop a list of enrichment items for an animal of their choice based on what they think that animal would like. Encourage them to think about the behavior that that type of enrichment would promote. Back in the

classroom, the students can make enrichment for a class pet or a pet at home, such as a decorated cardboard box or a piñata in which to hide a treat.

Evaluation

A three-point scoring rubric can be used to measure student engagement in the activity.

3	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student stays attentive and on-task during timed observation period• Student accurately records data on provided data sheet• Student discusses data with his/her peers	Two of these three criteria are met
	1
	One of these criteria is met

Find Out More

All About Enrichment

Zoo-keepers provide each animal some form of enrichment almost every day. Enrichment is designed to encourage animals to exhibit natural behaviors, such as foraging, hunting, digging, exploration and others.

Exhibit design:

Different levels, things to climb, and niches in which to hide are all exhibit components that keep animals interested. Keepers also make changes to exhibits so there's always something new.

Novel objects:

Unique items can be added to an animal's enclosure to encourage it to explore and interact with new things. Burlap bags, sheets, balls, chew toys, or papier-mâché piñatas filled with fruit treats are just a few examples.

Food:

Zoo-keepers scatter food so animals can forage and handle their food as they would in the wild. They might scatter it around the exhibit or hide it under rocks, within logs or in containers that are challenging to open. The zoo nutritionist creates a diet plan that includes a large variety of foods so the animals don't get tired of eating the same things each day.

Scent:

Animal-keepers sometimes introduce different scents to an exhibit such as spices, perfume, or even scents of other animals.

Sound:

Recorded sounds can be used to simulate what animals may hear in their natural environment.

Enrichment Search Data Sheet

Name

Date

Species

Animal:

Exhibit Design Food Novel Objects Scent Sound

What did you see?

Animal:

Exhibit Design Food Novel Objects Scent Sound

What did you see?

Animal:

Exhibit Design Food Novel Objects Scent Sound

What did you see?