ZOO



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Language and Literacy

Letter Mazes: Themed Alphabet

EZ.014.LA.1001-1002

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will identify and recognize uppercase and lowercase letters.
Students will make applications and associations to other activities and situations.

Each themed classroom includes a magnetic alphabet. A featured activity will be included with each themed magnetic alphabet. Students practice letter recognition by identifying the matching letters on a letter maze board, marking the letters with manipulatives (pom poms, jewels, mini erasers, etc.), and helping a letter friend get from a starting point to an ending point. Children require repeated exposure to the alphabet to develop letter recognition skills. This exposure helps them start recognizing sight words, paving the way for future reading fluency.

WHAT TO DO

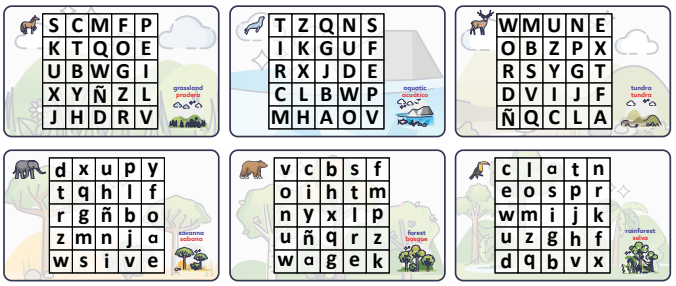
Introduce the letter maze. Explain the goal, to get the animal from the starting spot to the animal's home (habitat). Tell students that you will call out a letter from a deck of cards. If the student has the letter on their board, they can place a manipulative on the letter. Encourage students to finish the maze by creating a path from the animal's starting spot to the home.

PLAY TIPS

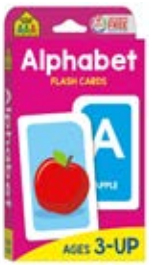
- Introduce this activity as a center, encouraging students to assume the role of alphabet "caller."
- As an alternative, use dry erase markers to circle and connect letters as they are called out. Students can see the visible path as they draw a line from one letter to the next.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED





A	B	C	D	E	F	G
H	I	J	K	L	M	N
O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
V	W	X	Y	Z	Ñ	









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Mathematics

Painting Numbers: Number Cards

EZ.014.LA.1003-1004

Activity Type:
Free Choice

Objectives:
Students will recognize numbers.
Students will recreate numbers with support.

Each themed classroom includes themed number cards. A featured activity will be included with each set of themed number cards. Students can practice writing numbers in creative ways using paint brushes and their finger. Emergent writing experiences, children's first attempts at the writing process, are important in the progression toward writing. This procedural knowledge about the mechanics of writing is an essential stage before students learn to write phrases and sentences that convey meaning.

WHAT TO DO

1. Cut wax paper and copy paper to the size and shape of the number cards. Place wax paper, copy paper, paint, paint brushes, cotton swabs, and number cards in a free choice center.
2. Demonstrate how to cover the number cards with a piece of wax paper and use a paintbrush or cotton swab to trace the numbers with paint. Students can press a cut sheet of copy paper over the paint to create a print. Continue the process with each number. Students can create a number book by stapling the pages together in numerical order once the paint has dried.

PLAY TIPS

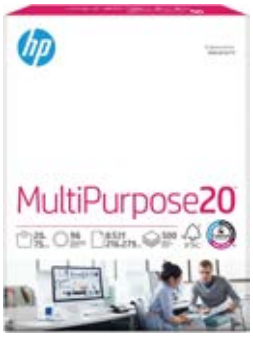
- Encourage students to add texture to their painted numbers by sprinkling salt or sand over the wet paint.
- Reuse the wax paper and make additional open-ended prints.

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Mathematics

Counting and Measurement

EZ.014.LA.1005

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will count items up to 10 with one-to-one correspondence.
Students will begin to add to and take away items.
Students will begin to use nonstandard measurement tools.

Students use counting manipulatives, non-standard forms of measurement like Unifix Cubes, and themed counters, to practice one-to-one correspondence and early practices of measurement using themed math cards. Measurement can be an abstract concept for young children. Manipulatives like blocks, cubes, or cups provide a tangible way to understand concepts like length, and height. By physically comparing and ordering objects, they can build a foundation for understanding measurement units later.

WHAT TO DO

After modeling how to use the mats, place the counting and measurement mats in a learning center as a teacher-directed or student-directed experience. As a teacher-directed experience, guide students to use manipulatives to show one-to-one correspondence and length. As a student-directed experience, allow students to freely explore the manipulatives and mats.

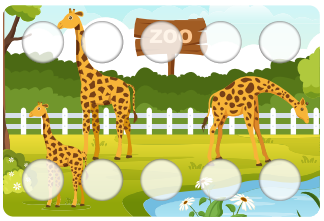
PLAY TIPS

- Use the math manipulatives to reinforce sorting by color and type. Encourage students to count how many are in each category. Encourage students to think of other ways to sort the manipulatives.
- Ask students to use the manipulatives to create patterns. Create simple pattern mats (ABAB, AABB, ABB) for additional support and guidance.

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Mathematics

Making Patterns

EZ.014.LA.1006

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will recognize common 2-D shapes.
Students will sort by features and attributes.
Students will recognize patterns.

Students explore patterns and properties of shapes as they create whole images using pattern blocks and themed pattern block mats. Pattern blocks boost students' ability to think critically, make predictions, and test their predictions.

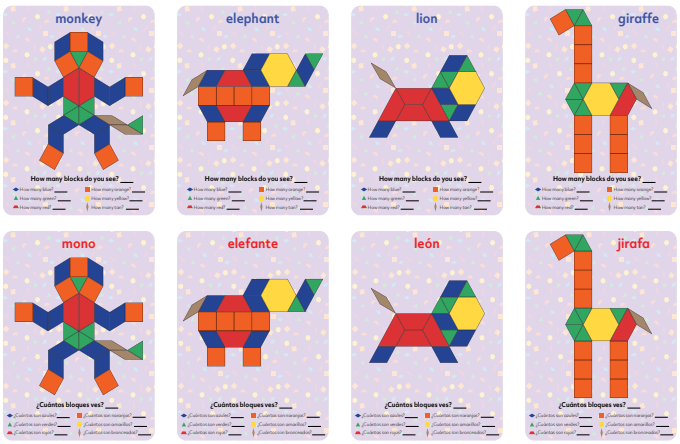
WHAT TO DO

Pattern block mats and pattern blocks work well as a self-directed activity. The intuitive nature requires little direction. Place the mats and pattern blocks out for students to explore freely, encouraging students to match the pattern block shape and color to the correlating space on the whole image.

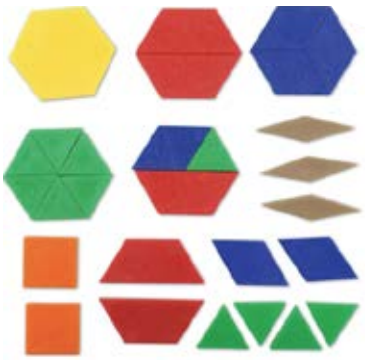
PLAY TIPS

- You can make your own pattern block cards by simply tracing pattern blocks on paper. Create a design using the pattern blocks and place the design on paper. Trace around the outer edge of your design and allow students to fill in the design with pattern blocks.
- Have students take a two-handed scoop of pattern blocks and sort by shape or color. Use graphing paper or a graphing mat to visualize the sorting process.
- Students can use mirrors to create patterns and make observations in the reflections. Ask students to describe what they are seeing as they create patterns in the mirrors.

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Language and Literacy

Pre-Writing Line Tracing

EZ.014.LA.1007

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will build pre-writing skills by tracing curved, notched, and zigzag lines. Students will recognize directionality in print and writing.

Students work on emergent literacy and transition to letter formations by tracing lines, patterns, and shapes with a theme in a dry erase, reusable format. To connect to fine motor development, students are encouraged to add detail. Themed templates are included for tracing.

WHAT TO DO

1. Place the dry erase templates in the writing center. Students have the choice to use dry erase markers on the dry erase templates or place paper on the template and trace using a pencil/crayon. Remind students to start from left to right and top to bottom.
2. Encourage students to make their own tracing templates using the dry erase templates as a guide. Students can work on tracing shapes, lines, and numbers by repetitively tracing the same shape, line, or number using a different color crayon each time.

PLAY TIPS

- Include the themed tracing patterns in the writing center to align with other free-choice writing exercises. Using a clipboard will help students control the writing utensil.
- Tape the template vertically, on an easel or teacher board, to encourage the strengthening of fine motor development.

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Language and Literacy

Syllable Awareness

EZ.014.LA.1009

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to blend and segment syllables in words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Recognizing that words can be broken down into syllables or units of sound is a phonological skill.

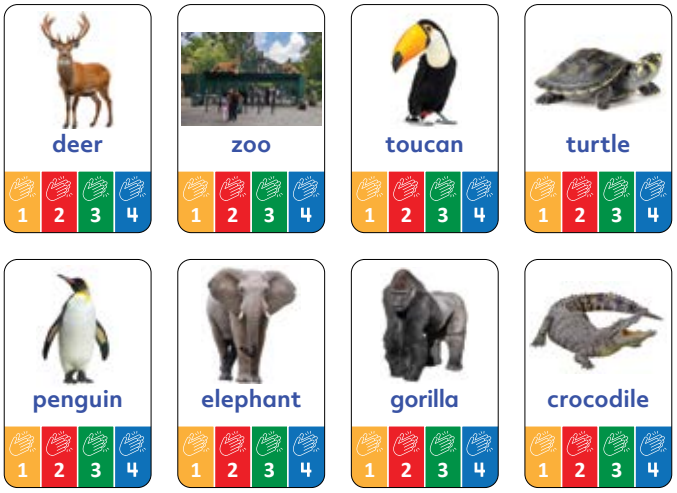
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the vocabulary cards as a guided activity or free choice center activity. Have students clap the number of beats on the vocabulary card and indicate the number by moving the clip.

PLAY TIPS

- Provide simple instruments to reinforce the number of syllables. Rather than clap the number of syllables in a word, students can shake the number of syllables.
- Students can use their body to emphasize syllables in a word. Have students jump up and down, tap their toes, march in place, do jumping jacks, or tap their head to count syllables.

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Language and Literacy

Rhyming Awareness

EZ.014.LA.1010

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to recognize rhyming words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Rhyming activities help children listen for ending sounds in words, a precursor to phonics activities in late preschool.

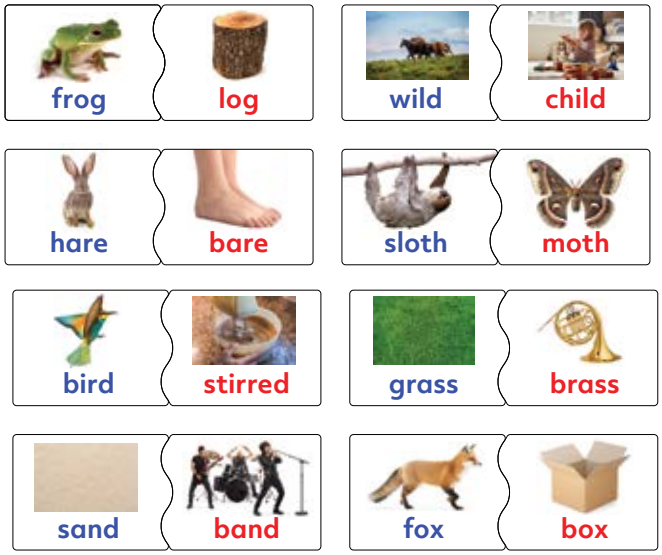
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the rhyming cards as a small group or free choice activity. Say the words on the cards together and help students to identify the rhyming pairs. Students can connect the rhyming pairs by placing the cards side by side on the table.

PLAY TIPS

- Play rhyming words with body parts. Have students touch their head, nose, arm, etc. and think of a word that rhymes with the body part.
- Play, *I Spy with My Little Eye*, using target items in the classroom. For example, decide on something in the classroom, like *door* as the target word. Then state, "I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with *floor*." The students look around the classroom for something that rhymes with floor.

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Language and Literacy

Onset and Rime Awareness

EZ.014.LA.1011

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to identify and segment one-syllable words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Onset and rime activities help children identify patterns in words.

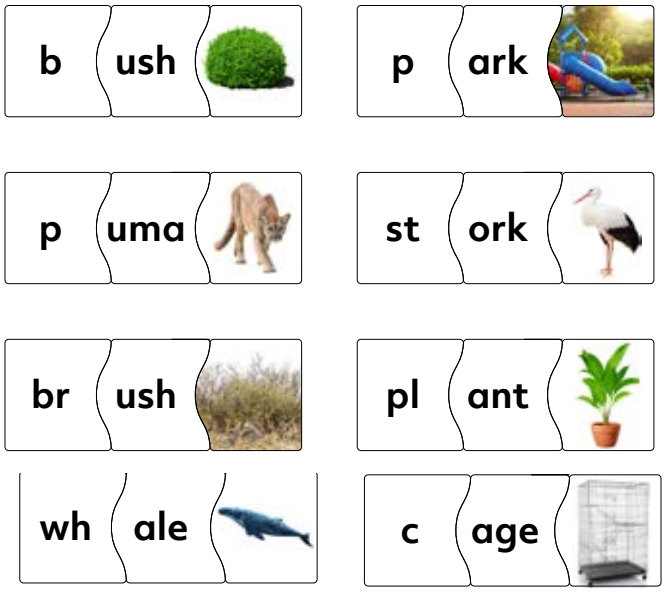
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the picture puzzles as a small group or free choice activity. As a small group exercise, model saying the onset together, the rime together, and the picture that identifies the word. As a free choice exercise, have the students put the pieces together to create a word.

PLAY TIP

Attach beginning and ending sounds to a set (2) of large dice. Have students roll the dice and say the word created, putting the onset and rime together.

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Language and Literacy

Animal Vocabulary: Word Bank Words

EZ.014.LA.1012

Activity Type:
Large Group and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will identify word bank words.
Students will recognize beginning and ending sounds in words.

Each themed classroom includes a word bank. A featured activity will be included with each themed word bank. Children build vocabulary as active participants in reading and reciting new vocabulary words. Students match tangible letters to letters in animal names using magnetic letters and animal identification cards. Frequent participation in this activity encourages letter-sound correspondence.

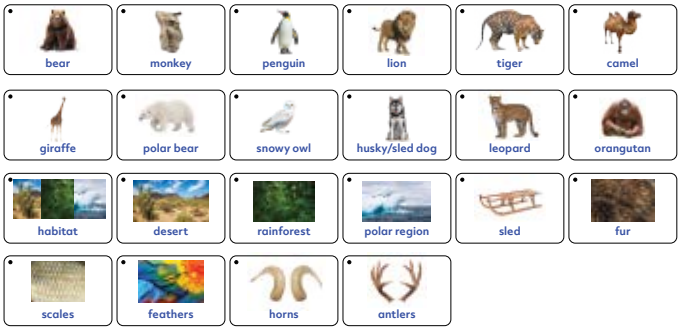
WHAT TO DO

1. Place the magnetic letters on a magnetic board in order. Show students an animal identification card. Ask a student to find the corresponding beginning letter from the line of magnetic letters. This can also be placed in the writing center as a free-choice activity.
2. Reading and reciting new vocabulary regularly helps students learn about word families and teaches students the sound of the English language. Share the word bank words during group time often; provide a rhyming word with each and ask students to think of any additional rhyming words.

PLAY TIPS

- Create rhyming rings and place in the writing center. Hook words that rhyme together on a metal ring; include a picture of the word.
- Play rhyming hopscotch. Use tape to create a hopscotch game inside or use chalk for an outside game. Place word bank words with pictures inside each square. Call out a word that rhymes with a word bank word and have a child hop to the appropriate rhyming word.

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Social and Emotional

Turtle Time

EZ.014.LA.1013

Activity Type:
Large Group and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will recognize emotions and communicate feeling words.
Students will replicate the emotions depicted on emotion and behavior cards.

The turtle technique is a calming method to diffuse intense emotions in the classroom. Educator models the turtle technique to help teach students to handle situations and emotions. Students practice making observations and recognizing social cues by dressing up like animals and imitating behaviors. Students can use emotion/behavior cards to mimic behaviors and talk about how to respond to behaviors. Learning about calming techniques in the classroom aids in immediate stress relief and lays the foundation for the development of healthy emotional regulation skills.

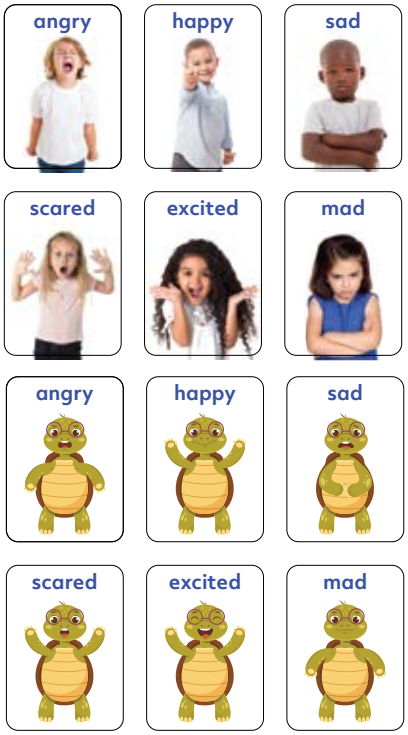
WHAT TO DO

1. Introduce the turtle puppet to the students. Have students determine a name for the turtle. The turtle can describe an example of a time that they felt angry, happy, sad, scared, excited, or mad. The turtle can ask the students if they ever felt the same as the described emotions. Tell the students that turtle has a special way to calm down when they feel angry, scared, or mad. The turtle recognizes they are angry (scared, mad, etc.), stops, goes into their shell (thinks calming thoughts like "I can calm down" and "I am okay"), relaxes their body, and comes out of their shell when they are ready.
2. Model the calming technique using the turtle puppet. Ask students to practice the calming technique together. Students can practice displaying emotions from the emotion cards while assuming an animal role using the animal masks. Ask students to practice the calming technique after displaying angry, scared, or mad emotions.

PLAY TIPS

- Designate a special place in the classroom that is the "shell" where students can go to calm down.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice turtle time through role playing.

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Science

Daylight, Starlight

EZ.014.LA.1014

Activity Type:
Large Group and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will examine and note the features and characteristics of animals.
Students will recognize and sort diurnal and nocturnal animals.

After reading *Daylight Starlight Wildlife* by Wendell Minor, educator creates a classroom working diurnal/nocturnal chart that students can continue adding to as they engage in classroom experiences. Students use pictures of animals from magazines or draw animals to continue adding to the comparison chart. Organizing and categorizing items enhances visual perceptual abilities, critical thinking, and memory.

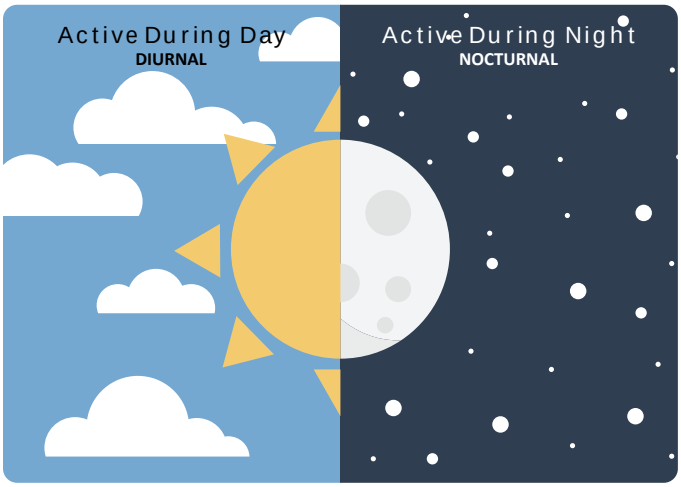
WHAT TO DO

1. Read *Daylight Starlight Wildlife* by Wendell Minor, focusing on the animals in the story, their habitat, and discussing animals' activity level during the day and during the night. Introduce the terms diurnal (active during the day) and nocturnal (active at night).
2. Use the diurnal/nocturnal sorting board and animals to sort animals from the story and continue holding discussions about the relationship between animals' habitat, appearance, and other features that help them make adaptations.

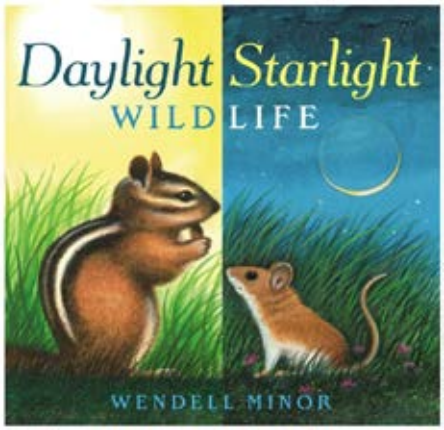
PLAY TIPS

- Create a scavenger hunt with the diurnal/nocturnal animals. Hide the animals around the classroom and ask students to find them and sort according to most active periods.
- Build a simple t-chart with the students and record some typical daytime and nighttime activities such as brush teeth, eat breakfast, go to school, sleep, and take a bath. Continue adding to the t-chart as students think of additional daytime/nighttime activities.

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Mathematics

Animal Habitats

EZ.014.LA.1015

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objective:
Students will sort and classify into groups based on similarities and differences.

Young students begin to recognize that items and objects can be sorted in meaningful ways. Animal homes and habitats are characterized most by often by climate and location. Students can sort animal, insect, and plant images onto habitat sorting mats and talk about the adaptations that allow them to survive there. Sorting and classifying teach young children about sizes, shapes, colors, similarities, and differences. This understanding is an essential precursor to number learning and understanding.

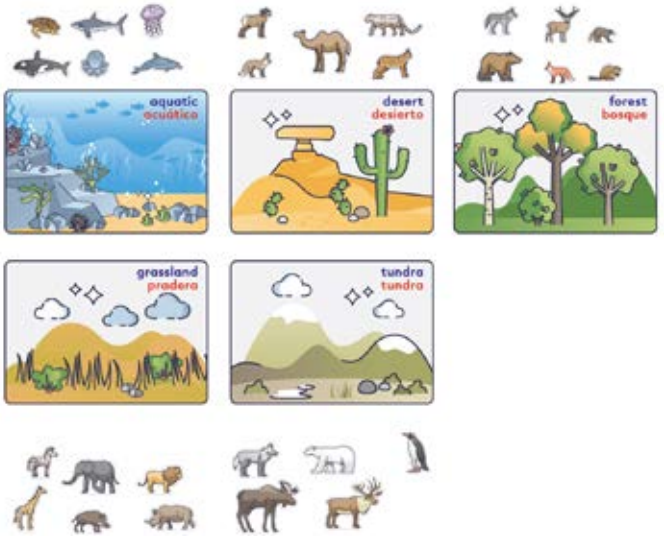
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the activity as a center. Students can sort animals by habitat or other teacher-directed or student-directed categories using the open-ended sorting mats. Ask students questions like “What does this animal need to live?,” “How does this animal move?,” and “Can you tell me anything else about this animal?” to help students sort by habitat.

PLAY TIPS

- Include this activity in the writing center, encouraging students to align word bank words to animals and features on the sorting mats and animal cards.
- Talk about the tracks or imprints that animals leave behind in a habitat (i.e. footprints, feathers, fur, skin).

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Science

Absorption

EZ.014.LA.1016

Activity Type:
Large Group, Small Group, and Free Choice

Objectives:
Students will apply background knowledge to inquiry-based investigations.
Students will observe, make predictions, and investigate outcomes.

A jungle biome consists of a mild climate and heavy rainfall. In contrast, a desert biome is dry with sparse rainfall. Desert plants must adapt to the dry conditions by absorbing rainfall very quickly and storing water in wax coated roots. Students can investigate the concept of absorption by using water and various materials to make observable comparisons between items that absorb water and those that repel it. These inquiry-based experiences help cultivate curiosity and creativity, encouraging children to ask questions about the world around them.

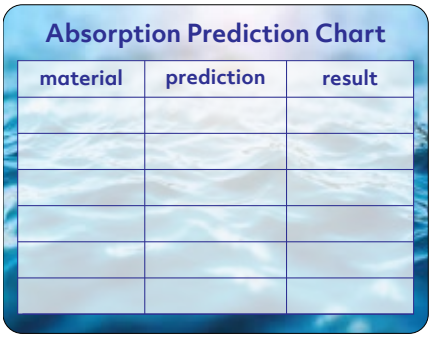
WHAT TO DO

1. Ask students what they know about water and record answers on chart paper or a dry erase board. Inform students that they will be conducting an investigation using water and various materials. Introduce the materials, ask students to make a prediction about water interacting with each material (introduce absorb and repel), and record their predictions.
2. Show students how to use the eyedropper and allow them to investigate, dropping water onto each material. Discuss student's observations, using absorb and repel. Record their results.

PLAY TIPS

- Have students make water drops on other surfaces, like clothing (cotton), cardboard, and a handheld mirror. Discuss how the water reacts to the materials as students investigate.
- Use the eyedropper to make drops on a window, bathroom mirror, or other vertical surface. Ask students what they notice about the drops and why they think that happens.

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Science

Wildlife in our Community

EZ.014.LA.1017

Activity Type:
Small Group

Objective:
Students will uncover wild animals in their community.

Students learn that wildlife exists in their own backyard! Students discover Texas wildlife around the classroom in this adaptation of I Spy. Educator hides photos/images of Texas wildlife around the classroom and students search for the hidden wildlife using a simple photo checklist. Continued discussion around wildlife can include respecting wildlife and their privacy, observing wildlife from afar, and comparing animal and human needs (identifying basic needs of living things).

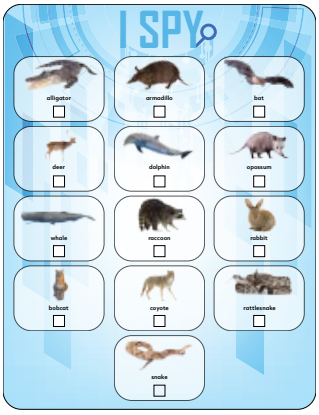
WHAT TO DO

1. Hide one set of Texas wildlife images. Tell students they are going to play a game of *I Spy*. Display the photos of Texas wildlife to the students and engage them in a discussion about each animal's identity. Tell students you hid the matching animals around the classroom, and it is their job to find the match.
2. Show students the I Spy checklists and encourage them to look for animal matches with a friend and science tools like binoculars and telescopes. Once animals are found, reiterate each animal's identity and relevance to Texas wildlife.

PLAY TIPS

- Take students on daily nature walks to observe animals (and insects) in the community. Students can record observations through drawings and keep tally marks on the number of animals they see.
- Explore Texas wildlife web cams. Talk about animal behaviors and patterns as you view the same animals over an extended period. Several resources include West Texas Feeders and Bat World Sanctuary. Other live cams from around the world include Kenya African River Wildlife, Kenya Watering Hole Manitoba Tundra, Manitoba Wapusk National Park, and Saskatchewan Plains and Watering Hole.

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Fine And Gross Motor

Biome Charades

EZ.014.LA.1018

Activity Type:
Large Group and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will develop fine and gross motor skills.
Students will use their body to describe animals.

Using animal charade cards that provide direction, students recreate animal behaviors and movements that would align with a biome. The observing students use a biome chart to make predictions about the animal's habitat or biome. Playing charades helps students think critically, strengthens social skills through collaboration, and enhances communication.

WHAT TO DO

1. Review animal behaviors using the charade cards. Decide how you will determine whose turn it is to perform a charade. One suggestion is to write students' names on craft sticks and pick from a container.
2. Draw a name and ask the student to choose a card without showing their peers. Student demonstrates the behavior as the other students guess the animal's identity and guess the appropriate biome. Offer suggestions to the demonstrator, if needed, until the animal's identity and biome are guessed correctly. Continue until all students have a turn.

PLAY TIPS

- Incorporate animal sounds in adaptations of charades.
- Incorporate animal movements into routines and transitions. For example, ask students to hop like a kangaroo over to a learning center or fly like a hawk to the lunch table.

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Fine Arts

Animal Puppet Habitats

EZ.014.LA.1019

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objective:
Students will interact with peers for creative expression and language development.

Puppets help students express themselves in different ways while using their imagination and creativity. Students use animal puppets to act out real-life scenarios with peers in the habitats spread throughout the classroom. Through puppet play, students are developing their speaking skills by increasing and improving classroom talk and communication.

WHAT TO DO

1. Take the students on a gallery walk through the classroom, discussing the embedded habitats throughout. Ask students the following questions: “What habitats do you see and how can you tell?” and “What animals live in this habitat?”
2. Set the puppet theater in a habitat and encourage students to create scenarios of their own or participate in educator-directed scenarios.

PLAY TIPS

- During morning meeting, use a puppet or several puppets to welcome children, lead a morning song, or discuss the events for the day. These simple modeled interactions introduce children to initiating positive conversations.
- Puppets can help make home-school connections. Children can take a puppet home along with a class journal and write/draw about all their adventures with the puppet at home.
- Create story stones. Draw or paint pictures of characters (puppets), settings, and items on a collection of stones for students to use as prompts in puppet storytelling.

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Mathematics

Sorting Wildlife

EZ.014.LA.1020

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will sort animals into student-initiated and educator-initiated categories.
Students will compare the features of objects.

Wildlife can be sorted in many ways: by habitat, physical features, movement, and more. In preschool classrooms, educators focus on sorting by physical attributes which will help students sort by other categories in the future. Using animals to sort, sorting bins, and sorting cards, students sort animals by physical features and simple classifications like ocean animals and land animals. Early sorting and categorizing activities are most effective when accompanied by math talk, like saying, "The green trees are on this side, and the brown trees are on this side."

WHAT TO DO

As a free-choice activity, students can naturally sort by habitat on the Animal Habitat activity table. Encourage dramatic play by including foliage and other dramatic play materials.

PLAY TIPS

- You can make your own sorting boards using butcher paper and circle stencils. Trace the appropriate amount of circles for categories on the butcher paper and label. Laminate for long-term use. Students can use the animal figures to sort by educator-initiated categories. Category ideas include sorting by habitat, land/water, classification, and characteristics.
- Use the animals as counting manipulatives or game markers.

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Science

Light Laboratory

EZ.014.LA.1021

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objective:
Students will investigate the fundamental principles of light.

The Flora and Fauna sensory table encourages investigation of the fundamental properties of light. This light lab can be used as a multi-sensory experience, adding tactile materials, transparent materials, and other materials to enhance color and intensity as part of center-based learning. Children learn about science concepts by actively exploring materials in their indoor and outdoor environments. Offering novel and interesting items can encourage this exploration.

WHAT TO DO

The Flora and Fauna Sensory Table (Light Laboratory) is multifunctional and includes a light panel, messy tray, weaving ring, and marble board. Children can manipulate color, hue, and intensity by turning the dials. Provide ample time for children to explore the light table in self-directed ways by simply switching out the supporting materials.

PLAY TIPS

- Use the messy tray for habitat exploration. Use shredded yellow, brown, and green paper to simulate the savanna and include savanna animals. Add sand, rocks, insects, and desert animals to simulate the desert. A polar habitat can be created with water, ice, and arctic animals.
- Add authentic greenery from the school yard and encourage students to make observations using the magnification blocks.
- When using the animal X-rays, encourage students to find the matching animal manipulative in the classroom.
- Encourage children to use the window markers and dry erase crayons to trace the translucent pattern blocks or make drawings of their own.
- Introduce the weaving ring, yarn, and loops of ribbon as a way to make lines, shapes, and geometric designs.

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Fine And Gross Motor

Nature's Footsteps

EZ.014.LA.1022

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will build an obstacle course.
Students will develop fine and gross motor skills as they navigate an obstacle course.

Students practice coordination and balance skills by manipulating photographic rubber-backed mats of various faux forest leaves, stones, and logs. Educator can encourage students to create a pathway from the Giant Gorilla Reading Nook to the book rack and jump from forest footstep to forest footstep. Students can also use the forest footsteps as reading mats as they gather around the Giant Bear. Developing gross and fine motor skills is crucial for children to perform everyday activities like running, walking, dressing, and eating.

WHAT TO DO

1. Review what it means to create and participate in an obstacle course. Model a simple obstacle course for students to participate in. For example, include simple steps like crawling under a chair, hopping on a leaf mat five times, walking on a balance block, and going under a wooden block bridge.
2. Ask a small group of students to create an obstacle course. Students can model participation for their peers.

PLAY TIPS

- Use the nature-based mats during group meeting as a classroom management tool. Using a mat as a guide, students can work on personal space and self-control.
- Students can use the forest footsteps as reading mats, gathering around the Giant Gorilla to share books or read independently.

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Social and Emotional

Magic Mirror Exploration

EZ.014.LA.1023

Activity Type:
Large Group and Small Group

Objective:
Students will explore animal movements and make comparisons to humans.

The classroom Magic Mirror provides visual insight into animal features and behaviors, creating an engaging learning environment. Children can enhance their learning by playing animal charades with charade cards or their own creativity, as well as by exploring and comparing their facial features using mirror boards. This interactive play not only fosters imagination but also reinforces knowledge about different species. Additionally, by exploring and comparing their own facial features using mirror boards, children can gain a deeper appreciation of the diversity in both animal and human characteristics.

WHAT TO DO

1. After students explore the Magic Mirror in an open-ended way, facilitate a group discussion, asking students to describe how the different types of animals move in the mirror. Ask students to mimic movements using their own body.
2. Ask students to investigate the All About Me mirrors and describe what they see, drawing attention to facial features. Make comparisons to animal movements from the Magic Mirror observations by asking questions like "How are you similar to a ____?," "How are you different than a ____?," and "What makes you unique?" Students can draw facial features on the opposite side of the All About Me mirrors as well.

PLAY TIPS

- Use music to accompany student-directed animal movements in the Magic Mirror.
- During transitions, play "Move Like an Animal," where one child is the leader, and moves from one activity to another while imitating an animal movement, and their peers follow.
- Use the mirrors to talk about feelings. Ask students to change their faces to show they are happy, sad, and so on.

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