

BUILD-A-HABITAT

Objective

For students to demonstrate the importance of habitat to an animal's survival.

Learning Outcomes

- Students can define the term habitat.
- Students can construct an appropriate habitat for a particular animal.
- Students can define the term ecology.

Materials

Buttons, clay, colored construction paper, cotton balls, felt, pieces of cardboard, shoeboxes, tissue paper, etc.

Vocabulary

Ecology Habitat



Procedure

1. Have each group elect a presenter to report which elements they decided their plant or animal needs. If the students did the homework and checked their answers, give them time to revise their answers prior to presenting. The presenter should name the group's animal or plant and the environmental elements they chose. Students from other groups can ask questions about the group's decisions.
2. All living things have needs that are satisfied by their environment. Explain that all of the elements they selected make up a **habitat**, which is what they have just created for their animal. Write the following definition on the chalkboard:

A habitat is the place where an animal or plant lives – it is like the plant's or animal's address. A habitat is the place where a living thing finds the food, water, shelter, and space it needs to survive.

Explain to the students that a habitat is often named for a physical characteristic or the major type of plants it includes. For example, a grassland is dominated by many kinds of grasses. A rain forest refers to the amount of precipitation (up to 300 inches of rain a year) the area receives.

3. Ask students the following questions: *Can any one living thing in a habitat exist without the other elements? Why or why not?* Have the students give some examples from their habitats to support their answers. If your students are having difficulty answering the questions and providing examples, ask them: *Can a squirrel exist without water or trees?* No, because it must drink to survive, it eats nuts from the trees, and uses the trees for shelter. *Can the sunflower exist without rain, the minerals it gets from the soil, or bees?* No, because it needs water and minerals from the soil to make its own food; without bees it could not reproduce more of its own kind.



4. You may elect to take this discussion a step further. It is often easy for students to see a direct connection – squirrels need trees and nuts. However, they may not immediately also understand that the trees depend on other elements such as minerals and water in the soil. So, without the minerals and water in the soil, squirrels could not survive. Tell the students that what they have been doing in their groups is studying **ecology**. Give them the following definition of the science of ecology:
Ecology is the study of how living things interact with each other and with the non-living things around them such as air, soil, and water.
5. Ask each student group to build a habitat for their animal. (Have the sunflower group choose an animal to build a habitat for.) Distribute the arts-and-crafts materials. Display the dioramas in a corner of the classroom.

Teacher's Note

If this activity is too materials intensive, ask all of the students to vote for one animal they want to build a habitat for as a class project.

From the *Habitat Ecology Learning Program (Grades 4-6)*



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