

# HABITAT HELPERS

Help create a new habitat for an animal



## POSSIBLE BUILDING MATERIALS

- Sticks/Bark
- Leaves
- Straws
- Toothpicks
- Playdough/Clay
- Fabric scraps

## TOOLS

- Tape/Glue
- Scissors

## TESTING MATERIALS

- To test whether the habitat can hold weight:
- Stuffed toy (select this in advance to help with planning)

## SET UP THE PROBLEM

1. Habitats are places that animals or humans live and where they sleep and get the food they need. The four features of habitats include food, water, shelter, and room to roam.
2. Sometimes habitats get damaged so that animals or people cannot live there anymore.
3. Choose an animal that needs a new habitat and build a new habitat that has the features they need to survive.

## ENGINEERING BACKGROUND

*Habitat restoration engineers* help to design and create new habits when they become damaged.

## LEARNING GOAL

*Systems thinking* is the understanding of how individual parts function, how they relate to each other, and how each part contributes to the system as a whole. In designing and building a habitat children will need to consider the parts that are necessary to the habitat, the role their structure plays in the habitat, and how their chosen animal will fit in and use the habitat.

## TIPS FOR ADULTS

**Before building:** Ask children to think about the features they think should be included in the animal habitat. Sometimes it's first helpful to think about what they have in their own habitat "What's in your habitat? What do you think the animal habitat should have? How big do you think it should be?"

After they test their design with a small toy or stuffed animal, prompt them to reflect on their design "How do you think it works? Do the parts work as you planned? Is there anything you can change to make it better?"

Note that you can provide more focus to this activity by asking children to think about a specific biome (i.e., forest, desert, water, tundra, grassland) or you could select a specific animal to focus on, allowing for more in-depth learning on a particular animal and their needs. And, depending on the age of the children, this activity could include discussion about the impact of humans on animal habitats.



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