

GRADE

- 9th – 12th Grade

MATERIALS

- Clipboard
- Pencil
- Worksheet
- Note pad

Animal Enrichment & Behavior

Introduction: Students explore animal enrichment and behavior by observing animals and habitats and asking education interpreters questions.

Goal: Students will use observation, analysis, and critical thinking skills to evaluate the effectiveness of animal enrichment strategies. By examining animal behavior, habitat design, and enrichment tools, students will be able to determine how enrichment contributes to animal wellbeing.

Instructions: Give each student a worksheet. As students walk through the zoo, they will observe different animals and talk to zoo staff about animal enrichment. Students will answer the questions on the worksheet and discuss their answers with the group.

Background Information: Animal enrichment refers to the process of enhancing an animals' environment to stimulate natural behaviors and improve quality of life. In the wild, animals spend much of their time hunting, foraging, exploring, and problem solving. In zoo settings enrichment helps replicate these challenges. There are several types of enrichment including physical enrichment, cognitive enrichment, sensory enrichment, social enrichment, and food-based enrichment. Effective enrichment encourages behaviors such as hunting, playing, exploring, and socializing. A lack of enrichment can lead to boredom, stress, or repetitive behaviors, such as pacing.

Conservation Message: Providing proper enrichment is an essential part of animal care and conservation. Zoos play a critical role in protecting endangered species, educating the public, and supporting research. By improving animal welfare through enrichment, zoos help ensure animals remain healthy, both physically and mentally. Understanding enrichment also helps scientists and conservationists develop better strategies for reintroducing animals into the wild and maintaining sustainable populations. Small actions, like supporting accredited zoos, conservation programs, and environmental awareness, can contribute to global wildlife protection.

Name _____



Directions:

Talk to zoo staff, read information signs, and observe the animals and their habitats. Write your answers below.

1. Giraffes

How does olfactory (scent) enrichment affect the activity level of an animal?

2. Orangutans

How does enrichment help this animal show natural behaviors?

3. Sea lions

How does enrichment decrease stress levels in this animal?

4. Eastern Grey Kangaroos

How does enrichment help provide choice and control for this animal?
