

ENRICHMENT: Camouflage

Introduction

To protect themselves from predators, animals have developed physical adaptations that allow them to blend in with their surroundings so that predators cannot see them. This adaptation is called camouflage. Camouflage is also used by predators to help sneak up on prey.

Predator Role: One student is the predator bird. Students can choose. Examples are Barn Owl, Red Tailed Hawk, Eagle, Barred owl. Predator birds stay on their perch, conserving their own energy, watching with their excellent eye sight for prey animals. The predator's perch is a one foot square space that he/she never leaves. Set the prey boundaries fairly close to the perch.

Prey Role: The remainder of the class is prey. Examples of prey animals are vole, mice, chipmunks, little cats, and little dogs. Prey animals ALWAYS must watch the predators. In this simulation, prey MUST ALWAYS be able to see the predator, In other words, at least of the eyes of the prey must always be visible to the predator, prey thus relying on camouflage, as opposed to hiding themselves entirely behind a rock, tree, etc.

Play: To ensure that prey is playing fairly we've made some extra rules. Though easy to understand, students will likely need a few rounds to get it right. Be patient! While the predator has closed their eyes and *slowly and loudly* counts to 30 (or whatever works for your class), the prey find hiding spots. Remember, they must stay at least partly visible to the predator. After finishing the count, the predator opens their eyes and tries to find prey, without leaving their perch. The predator points to any prey seen (with an arm extended) and announces something like "I see the prey right there." Sometimes additional information like coat color or what tree is close helps. The prey, which is ALWAYS looking at the predator, should come right in. The captured prey gathers in a place away from the predator. The predator continues seeking prey while on a perch until no more can be found. No more than 2 minutes.

At this point there are three options:

- Have everybody remaining stand up and walk in. Then determine the next predator.
- Have every prey remaining make an animal sound that may help the predator, and resume play.
- After finishing the first round of searching, have the predator hold up a number on their hand, 1-5, making sure that all prey have time to see it. Prey must remember this number. The predator then closes their eyes again and counts to 15 out loud. While the count is being made, prey must move hiding spots, this time to a place closer to the predator. The 2min or so hide and seek period is repeated, ending with the predator holding up a new number 1-5. ***When any remaining prey see the 2nd number, it is the cue for them to leave their places and race towards the predator. The first prey to touch the predator and correctly repeat the two numbers is the winner of the round, and gets to be the next predator. These rules, while somewhat complicated ensure that prey is playing the game correctly, and encourages them to get as close to the predator as possible. Students can get it figured out over the course of 2-3 rounds.***



Assessment/Reflection

Discuss the ability to blend into the natural background as a survival adaptation. How do you blend in to a forest with its many different colors? Many forest animals or animals that live in tall grasslands have spots or stripes on their fur. The spots and stripes mimic the shadows that fall through leafy or grassy areas and make the animals difficult to see. List some striped or spotted animals and the habitat that they live in.



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