



Live Animal Care Guide

Welcome to Your Live Animal Materials

In this guide you will find the materials and information needed to prepare and care for your hermit crabs.

SK1.3 Animals & Survival

Anchoring Phenomena:
Animals & Survival

Driving Question:
How do animals survive?

Science Center Support Materials

Bag Z

- Hermit crab shells - 2 med, 2 lg
- 1 sea sponge
- 1 full petri dish
- 1 – 3oz vial marine salt

Loose Items

- 1 – 16-quart container with lid w/holes
- 2 – 32oz. containers of sand

Vendor Provided

- 3 Hermit crabs
- 1 vial hermit crab food

Coenobitidae clypeatus – Hermit Crab Care Guide

IMPORTANT NOTICE

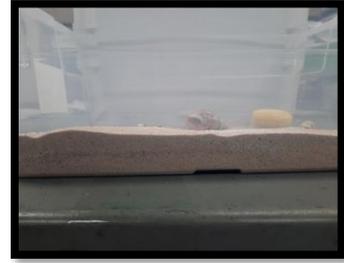
Your live materials will be priority shipped and require immediate opening upon arrival. It is important that you prepare habitats for their arrival accordingly, as leaving them in their shipping packaging for too long could lead to increased stress for the animals.

Every effort is made to ensure the safe arrival of your hermit crabs. However, if upon receiving your shipment your hermit crabs are clearly ill or dead; please notify us so that we can send a replacement (sciencecenter@oneida-boces.org). Unfortunately, our new vendor will require proof of the deceased animal, so please provide a picture with your email.

Preparing for Arrival

After you have ordered your hermit crabs, you will receive a box labeled Grade 1 Hermit Crab Support Materials, from the Science Center. The box will contain everything needed to support your live animal in terms of housing. The animal **food** will be supplied by the vendor and will arrive **separately** from the Science Center materials. You will need dechlorinated water for these animals. **This can be done by filling a gallon jug with water and letting it sit open for at least 24 hours to allow the chlorine gas to dissipate.**

1. Cover the bottom of the terrarium with the provided sand. It is preferred to have the sand as deep as the hermit crab is tall so that they may completely bury themselves.



2. Place the provided Petri dishes on opposite sides of the terrarium, with the sea sponge in one. **Add salt water to the petri dish with the sea sponge**, and dechlorinated fresh water to the other. These dishes of water will not only provide nutrition to the hermit crabs, but help with humidity in the terrarium.

- a. Chlorine is very harmful for hermit crabs; therefore, it's important to make sure the water is dechlorinated. This can be done by filling a gallon jug with water and letting it sit open for at least 24 hours to allow the chlorine gas to dissipate. Serve the water in the petri dish that is provided in the support materials box. Land hermit crabs are extremely sensitive to metal, so be aware of the lead content in your water supply. It is recommended to give them two water dishes, one with fresh water and one with water mixed with marine salt (about 1/2 tbsp. per cup of water).



- b. Keep the container covered with the lid with holes provided, as hermit crabs are adept escape artists and will try to climb out if given the chance, but this will also help with humidity.
 - c. If keeping the hermit crabs through dry winter months or in consistently warmer locations, a spray bottle might be helpful to maintain a more humid environment for the hermit crabs. They prefer damp sand on one side of the container because they like to dig in the bottom of the tank, spray the sand often to keep it damp.
 - d. The most important thing to remember about keeping hermit crabs healthy is the humidity. Hermit crabs are used to tropical and moist conditions. Using sponges or spray bottles in the hermit crabs container is a very effective way of dispersing humidity into the air.
3. Place the additional sea shells with different sized openings into the habitat.
 - a. Hermit crabs may occasionally change shells. This behavior allows them to inspect their current shell, try out a different one, and sometimes return to their original shell. Providing a variety of appropriately sized shells helps support this natural behavior.
 - b. Shown is damp moss placed inside a Petri dish in the cool hide. If you do not wish to provide moss, it is suggested that you dampen a paper towel and place it in the cool separate hide for the gecko. Replace the paper towel every other day. This will help the gecko to shed as needed.



4. **Optional additions to the habitat:** Hermit crabs like to climb and play, and plastic plants and pieces of coral are ideal for them. They like to have a few hiding places to make them feel the most comfortable.

Arrival Day

Your crabs will arrive safely packed in a sealed, but breathable, container. Upon arrival do not delay in removing them from their shipping containers and placing them into their new habitat.

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Feeding

Hermit crabs are scavengers. When feeding the pellet foods, slightly moisten the food. Remove any food not eaten daily as the food may mold in the humidity of the habitat.

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It's also important to clean out the food and water dishes every day and to give the hermit crabs fresh food daily. **Don't use soap on the food or water dish**, simply wipe with a paper towel.

Once you have used the food provided, please visit your local pet store to replenish your supply.

Holiday Feeding and Care

While leaving the hermit crabs in school over the two-day weekend is perfectly fine, **if school is closed for an extended period of time, the hermit crabs should be brought home with the teacher or a student volunteer.**

Maintenance of Habitat

Another important requirement of keeping hermit crabs is to keep the temperature at around 70° to 78°. Do not put the hermit crab container in the sun or near a draft, because they cannot be kept in a place that is too hot or cold for human comfort. You can put a light bulb above them when it's cold.

Handling

Similar to any other animal, be sure to wash hands before and after contact. Hermit crabs are social animals. When you pick up your hermit crab, gently grasp it by the back of its shell. You can put your palms together and watch it scurry back and forth.

- **Be very careful not to drop the hermit crab.** It is a good idea to have your hands resting or only slightly above a flat surface, like a desk or a carpeted floor.
- If dropped a short distance, it may not be hurt, but it will be frightened and could pinch when you try to pick it back up.
- If it is dropped from a great distance this may be fatal to the crab.

Hermit crabs can pinch (feels like a clothespin on your finger), but they won't pinch unless they are alarmed by rough handling.

- While holding it, if you tap its shell gently, it will stay inside of the shell. If you do happen to get pinched by a crab and it doesn't let go, run a small amount of lukewarm tap water over it—then it should let go.

When they are wandering back and forth from hand to hand, you'll feel a tiny grasping—that's just the hermit crab trying to keep its balance and hold on and should not be thought of as pinching.

Never attempt to remove a hermit crab from its sea shell! This can be fatal to the hermit crab.

Molting

Like other crustaceans, hermit crabs will molt from time to time as they grow. This process can take weeks to months and the crabs are highly sensitive and vulnerable during it. They will bury themselves in sand for protection; it is very important to **NOT** move or disturb a crab in its molting process, as this could be harmful or even deadly.

Removal from Classroom

Teachers are free to keep the hermit crabs. **Teachers who wish to keep their hermit crabs will be responsible for providing food and anything else needed to house/care for the animal.**

At some point you may want to say goodbye to your classroom pet. There are a number of ways to safely remove them from your classroom:

1. **Sending your classroom pet home with a student(s) is possible only with parent agreement and an understanding of how to appropriately care for the animal. Please confirm with parent. Student is responsible for providing a home, food and anything else needed to house/care for the animal.**
2. Contact your middle and high school science teachers to see if they have any interest in housing the animal.
3. Contact a local pet store to see if they will accept your animal.
4. If you are part of OHM BOCES and our couriers go to your school, please email the Science Center at sciencecenter@oneida-boces.org to arrange a live animal pick-up.