



Discover Science Centre
Roscahill, Co. Galway
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DPS Activity Sheet 3

Survival Game

This activity helps children to think about what animals need to survive in the wild, and also about the role of predators. It also is great fun and a good way of warming up outside.

Suitable age-groups

All primary classes
Discussion points can be added for older children.

Equipment

Three boxes of objects representing food, water and shelter. You can use soft plastic balls in three different colours, or natural objects such as hazel nuts for food, twigs for shelter and small stones to represent water.

You will also need a large flat area that is safe for running.
A photograph of a field mouse is helpful but not essential

Method

Place the three boxes at the far end of the flat area.

Ask the children to imagine that they are field mice, living in a small woodland. It is not easy for a mouse to survive. They don't have warm houses to live in and supermarkets for buying food. What do they need to survive? The main things are food, water and shelter. They also may need a mate. The other main aspect of survival is to avoid being eaten by a predator. What animals might try and eat them? (An owl, a fox, a cat from a nearby farm).

Choose a child to be an owl or other predator. The other children are mice.

Explain the game to the children:

In order to survive, they each have to collect one piece of food, one piece of shelter and one object representing water. They will have three chances to run up the field and collect one object from a box on each run. The predator will be trying to catch them. If the predator catches them before they have collected their object they must go back to the start, if they already have one they must put it back.

Do the usual Ready, Steady, Go to start the children on each run. If required, a second predator can be introduced for the second or third run.

After three runs, see how many children have managed to survive by collecting all three objects. Aim for about half the mice to survive successfully. You can adjust the distance and numbers of predators to get approximately this outcome.

Discussion points

1. Introduces the notion of predator and prey. Can the children think of other examples? (For example, blackbirds and worms, blue-tits and caterpillars, foxes and chickens). For older children this can be linked to the idea of a food chain,

2. Small animals probably do not have a high survival rate, especially in winter. Only half the group surviving may be realistic.
3. Discuss other factors that may threaten the survival of a small animal like a field mouse. (For example, very cold weather, habitat loss)
4. Discuss the ways in which some species try and avoid predators. (For example, camouflage colouring of animal fur and bird feathers, animals that 'freeze' if they sense a predator, birds that as a group will mob a hawk to keep it away from their nests.)

Additional activity

A popular related activity at Brigit's Garden is making mouse houses in the woodland. Children work in groups of 3 or 4 and have 10 -15 minutes to make a small shelter for a mouse out of leaves, twigs, moss etc. They can add a soft sleeping nest and if they wish can add natural decorations. They can also forage for suitable food such as hazel nuts and small berries and add a store of food.

Survival Game

Prey & Predators



Wood Mouse



Fox



Barn Owl