

HABITAT LAP SIT

Objective: Students will be able to understand that all living things, including humans, depend on specific habitats, which include clean water and suitable space; describe the components of wildlife habitat and describe how human activities can threaten habitats.

Illinois State Goals: 12.B.

Top Book Hits:

Animal Habitats! by Judy Press; **ISBN-13:** 978-0824967567

The Usborne World of Animals by Susanna Davidson & Mike Unwin;

ISBN-13: 978-0439798068

A Forest Habitat (Introducing Habitats) by Bobbie Kalman;

ISBN-13: 978-0778729792



Materials Needed:

- None

Procedure:

People and other animals share some basic needs. Every animal needs a place in which to live. The environment in which an animal lives is called “habitat”. An animal’s habitat includes food, water, shelter, and space in an arrangement appropriate to the animal’s needs.

If any on these components of habitat is missing or is affected significantly so that the arrangement for the individual animal or population of animals is no longer suitable, there will be an impact. The impact will not necessarily be catastrophic, but could be. There are a great many additional limiting factors beyond those of suitable food, water, shelter and space. For example, disease, predation, pollution, accidents and climatic conditions are among other factors which can have impact. All things are interrelated. When we look at a biological community, we find interrelationships and interdependencies between plants and plants, plants and animals, as well as animals and animals. These interrelationships and interdependencies are important.

The major purpose of this activity is for students to become familiar with the correspondence of habitat, and to recognize that it is not sufficient for there to be food, water, shelter and space in order for animals to survive—those components of habitat must be in suitable arrangement.

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Steps:

1. Introduce the concept of habitat. Ask students what they need to survive and group these requirements into the four habitat categories: food, water, shelter, and space (some may end up in a fifth category — "other"). Explain that all living things must have their needs met in all four categories. In this activity, students will form a marine animal's habitat and see what happens if one or more of the creature's needs are not met.
2. Take the class to a grassy area outside or a large, open indoor space. Ask the students to number off from "one" to "four." All the "ones" go to one corner of the space, the "twos" to another, and so on, leaving a clear space in the middle.
3. Using the polar bear or another creature as an example, assign each group a habitat requirement as follows: "ones" represent food (ringed seals), "twos" represent water (rain and snow), "threes" represent shelter (dens built in snow drifts or in the ground), and "fours" represent space (open seas and pack ice). You can use any habitat as an example, prairie, woods, etc.
4. Now, it's time to form a circle! This is done by building the circle in chains of food, water, shelter, and space. A student from each of the four groups walks toward the cleared area. The four students stand next to each other, facing in toward what will be the center of the circle. Four more students — one from each group — join the circle. Keep adding to the circle in sets of four until all the students are in the circle.
5. All students should now be standing shoulder to shoulder, facing the center of the circle.
6. Ask the students to turn to their right, at the same time taking one step toward the center of the circle. They should be standing close together, with each student looking at the back of the head of the student in front of him or her.
7. Ask everyone to listen carefully. Everyone should place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. At the count of three, you want the students to sit down on the knees of the person behind them, keeping their own knees together to support the person in front of them. You then say, "Together you represent suitable polar bear habitat — food, water, shelter, and space all arranged just right."
8. The students at this point may either fall or sit down. When their laughter has subsided, talk with them about the necessary components of suitable habitat for people and wildlife.

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9. After the students understand the major point — that food, water, shelter, and space are necessary for any animal's survival and comprise suitable habitat — let them try the circle activity again. Remind them that together they represent polar bear habitat. This time, ask them to hold their lap-sit posture. As the students lap-sit, identify some of threats to habitat. For example, explain that climate change could result in shorter periods when pack ice is available. Remove some of the "space" people. Then say that, with less pack ice available as a platform for hunting ringed seas, polar bears will have diminished access to food. Remove some of the "food" people. Then explain that mining and oil-drilling developments will result in the loss of denning sites. Remove some of the "shelter" people. At some point, the circle will collapse. Ask the students what will happen to the polar bear when its habitat is no longer suitable.
10. Ask the students to talk about what the activity means to them. Have them summarize the main ideas. Be sure to address the following:
 1. Food, water, shelter, and space, in their appropriate arrangement, are called habitat.
 2. Humans and marine species depend on habitat.
 3. Loss of any of the elements of habitat has serious impact on the animals living there.
 4. Humans often damage or destroy marine habitats with developments or make them unsuitable through climate change or contamination.

Alternate Hits: Modifications for younger or challenged students:

Younger or challenged students may be unable to successfully lap-sit. If so, follow the instructions up to step 6. With hands on each other's shoulders, instead of sitting down, they should pass a gentle "squeeze" around the circle (each person squeezes the shoulders of the person in front of him or her after his or her own shoulders have been squeezed). Choose a student to start the "squeeze." If the "squeeze" makes it back around to the person who started, the habitat is complete enough for the animal to survive. Remove students from the circle, but don't allow them to make the circle smaller. At some point, the remaining students will not be able to reach each other to pass on the "squeeze." Then the habitat is no longer suitable.

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