

Animal Observations using an Ethogram

Overview

In this activity, you will be an observational scientist using an **ethogram** to record the **behaviors** of the animal you chose to study. Behaviors that an animal can exhibit includes: finding food, avoiding predators, communicating, and caring for their young. Studying animal behavior can be useful for learning what behaviors are normal, monitoring the health of the animal, and learning how the animal communicates with others. Study animals can be wild like a squirrel or bird, and domestic like a cat or dog! You can chose to observe animals in your house, outside your window or in your yard, or you can even find an animal webcam at a zoo to learn more about an animal's behavior!

Key Words

What is an **ethogram**?

- An Ethogram is a record of different behaviors exhibited by an animal.

What are **behaviors**?

- Behaviors are anything that an animal does in response to their environment.

Materials

- Ethogram worksheet.
- Pencil or pen.
- Stopwatch, wrist watch, or cell phone with a stopwatch feature.
- Computer with internet to watch an animal webcam from a zoo. (Optional)

Directions

- Choose an animal to study.
- Record the date, time, and description of study animal and the habitat.
- Use the behavior chart to record behaviors you observe every 30 seconds. (Parent or student can keep track of time while another student records observations.)
- For every 30 seconds for 5 minutes, students will record the study animal's behaviors in the behavior chart.
- Conduct this activity multiple times throughout the data to observe how an animal's behavior changes throughout the day.

Observational Questions

- What behavior do you think will be most common for your study animal?
- Do you think any behaviors will change throughout the day?
- How do you think certain behaviors help your study animal survive?
- What do you think your observations could be useful for?
- What other types of questions would you like to answer about your study animal?

Post Activity Assignment

Students can compile their observations to analyze and conclude what they have found. Examples could include: what they learned about their study animal's habitat, what behaviors were most common, drawing what some of the behaviors looked like, or graph the behaviors to see which one was most common.

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Scientist's Name: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Study Animal: _____

Description of Study Animal: _____

Description of Habitat: _____

Behavior Chart

- Record the behaviors of your study animal with a tally mark every 30 seconds.
- Continue recording observations every 30 seconds for 5 minutes.
- Conduct ethograms throughout the day to observe how your study animal's behavior changes throughout the day.
- Anything interesting can be recorded in the Notes section.

Time	Sleeping	Eating/Drinking	Communicating	Playing	Fighting	Moving
0:30						
1:00						
1:30						
2:00						
2:30						
3:00						
3:30						
4:00						
4:30						
5:00						

Notes: