



Habitat Circles (Modified from Project WILD)



Prep

Review the essential components of habitat that all wildlife species need to survive: food, water, shelter, and space.

How to

- Have students count off 1 to 4. Designate each numbered group as one of the four habitat components (All the ones as water, all the twos as food, etc.).
- Have each group stand in a different area of the room or outdoor space. Ask students if they think if this is a good arrangement for all of the parts of our habitat. If you were an animal, do you think it would be easy or hard to find everything you need if you had to travel to different places to get food, water, shelter, and space?
- Discuss some examples of habitat needs for different species. For example, a tree provides both shelter (place to build a nest, tree cavities) and food (acorns, nuts, and seeds) for squirrels. Wildlife need to have everything close enough so that they can escape predators or avoid using too much energy to travel in search of food or water.
- Ask students to all stand in a big circle, making sure they are standing next to someone from a different habitat group.
- Run a long piece of rope or yarn around the circle of students, asking everyone to hold onto the rope. Tie the ends together to complete the circle. Make sure everyone is spaced out enough so that the rope is taut, making a nice round circle, or a complete habitat. All of our habitat components are now close together.
- Discuss with students what they think would happen to our habitat if there was a drought. Ask all of the students in the water group to let go of the rope. What does the habitat look like now? Is it complete?

- Discuss with students what happens when one habitat component is in short supply. How does this affect wildlife? How could this also affect people?
- Ask everyone to grab onto the rope again and play out a different scenario. Explain that a big highway was built in our habitat. How might that highway affect our four different habitat components? Who should let go of the rope this time? Some of each habitat component would be diminished, since certain animals will not be able to cross the highway to get to everything they need. If the highway separates animals from a key water or food source, most of the students would let go of the rope.
- Explain that connectivity of habitats is critical for the survival of wildlife species because connection of habitat components makes it far less challenging for wildlife to survive.

Variation

- Follow the first three steps above, then have students stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. Ask everyone to turn to their right and at the same time take one step towards the center of the circle.
- Ask students to place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. On the count of three, everyone will slowly sit down on the knees of the person behind them to create a lap sit circle. The circle should support itself because all of the components of our habitat are working together!
- Add in some scenarios! For example, in our pretend habitat, during a drought year, ask the water students to remove themselves from the circle. The circle will mostly likely collapse or become pretty messy! Other scenarios include water pollution, loss of open space due to development, etc.

About Project WILD

Project WILD's mission is to provide wildlife-based conservation and environmental education that fosters responsible actions toward wildlife and related natural resources. All curriculum materials are backed by sound educational practices and theory, and represent the work of many professionals within the fields of education and natural resource management from across the country.

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