



Classifying Animals Scavenger Hunt

Grade: 3rd

Subject: Science

Time Required: 30 min to 1 hour

Setting: Outdoors

Materials:

- Scavenger Hunt Sheet
- Pencils
- Clipboard
- Magnifying glass (optional)

Objectives:

Students will 1) identify the diets and body structures of different animals, and 2) classify different animals according to their diets and body structures.

Vocabulary and Examples:

- **Herbivore:** An animal that gets its energy from eating only plants, such as a deer or butterfly.
- **Omnivore:** An animal that gets its energy from eating both plants and other animals such as a raccoon or human.
- **Carnivore:** An animal that gets its energy from eating other animals such as a lion or bobcat.
- **Scavenger & Decomposer:** An animal that gets its energy from eating or breaking down dead plants and/or dead animals, such as a vulture and a mushroom.
- **Vertebrate:** An animal that has a backbone such as a human, a fish, and a dog.
- **Invertebrate:** An animal that does not have a backbone such as a crab, a snail, and insects.

Background knowledge

Scientists classify animals (or group them together based on their similarities) in order to organize and make it easier for them to study the different animals. Classifying animals is useful because once an organism is classified, a scientist then knows a lot of information about that organism. For example, if you know that a crow is classified as a bird, then you know that a crow has wings, feathers, and a beak. There are many different ways to categorize animals. One way is to determine if the animal has a backbone or spinal column (**vertebrates** have these physical features present, whereas **invertebrate** are lacking these features). Scientists also classify animals according to their diets and how they obtain energy such as: **herbivores, omnivores, carnivores, scavengers** and **decomposers**.

Our mission is to educate, inspire and empower all people to be active stewards of the environment and their own well-being.



Preparation for the Activity:

- 1) Print the attached scavenger hunt sheet. You may print enough for students to either work in pairs or one copy to work all together as a class.
- 2) Plan a route for a nature walk around the school campus or playground.
- 3) Keep in mind that selecting different locations or spots with a higher diversity of life will make the activity more enjoyable for students.

Note: We **always** suggest going outside to observe living animals, however, you can enrich this activity by having the children look through books about animals at the library, or by watching an animal documentary from an educational channel such as National Geographic or Animal Planet.

Activity:

- 1) Tell students that scientists like to categorize and sort different living things to see how they are alike and different...and today they are scientists who will be doing just that by exploring the nature and discovering interesting information about animals living all around us!
- 2) Prior to the walk, teach students the definitions of each category (see above under **Vocabulary and Examples**). Share these definitions with the students along with examples of each in the classroom before they go on their nature walk scavenger hunt.
- 3) Tell the students that they are scientists out on a hunt searching for all different types of animals. When they encounter an animal, their job is to first ask, "What could this animal eat?" Once the student determines the diet of the animal they must then look at the body of the animal and ask the question, "Does this animal have a backbone or a spine?" Having answered these two questions, the student should write the name of the animal where it belongs on the scavenger hunt. If they are unsure of the animal name, an educated guess will do!
Note: Remember to mention to students that they might not know the diet or body structure of every animal they encounter and that's okay! If they don't know how to classify an animal, tell students to make a guess and put a small question mark by the name of the animal.

Key Questions and Extensions:

Once students have had enough time to list the different animals on their scavenger hunt chart, return to the classroom to discuss findings with students. Possible questions and activities may include:

- Were there any animals you didn't know how to classify? (If so, have students search on the web or in the library to find answers about the diet and body structure of the animal.)
- Looking at your scavenger hunt chart, for which of the categories were you able to find the most animals? Were there any categories for which you could not find any animals that qualified? Why do you think this might be?
- Did any of your categories have all or mostly small animals? Did any of them have all or mostly large animals? Why do you think this might be?
- Today, our habitat was _____ (wherever the activity was conducted such as the school playground, near/far from a body of water, a natural habitat, a man-made habitat such as a garden, etc.). Think about a very different habitat such as _____ (the ocean, desert, arctic, jungle, African safari, etc.). Can you think of a different animal from this new habitat for each of the categories on the scavenger hunt chart?

*Our mission is to educate, inspire and empower all people to be active stewards
of the environment and their own well-being.*