

Create a Shoebox Habitat

First graders love to create stories. Their especially imaginative brains are always coming up with plots and characters for even the simplest of things. This knack for creative story building is something that can help your child in any subject. In first grade, part of your child's science unit will be learning about the characteristics of different habitats. He'll discuss geography, learn about different kinds of environments, and talk about what kinds of animals live where. By creating a shoebox habitat with your child, you will expand on what he is learning in school and allow him to put those budding creative instincts to good use!



What You Need:

- Shoebox
- Construction paper
- Play dough in various colors
- Various supplies based on your habitat (For example: sand, some leaves from the yard, cotton balls to use as snow or clouds etc.)
- White card stock
- Plastic toy animals (Optional)

What You Do:

1. Ask your child to tell you about the different habitats that he has talked about in school. If he doesn't remember, you can ask him questions about the forest, ocean, desert, grassland and arctic habitats. For example, "What's the weather like in the desert?" "Is there a lot of water in forest habitats?" "What kinds of plants and animals live in the ocean?"
2. Have your child select a habitat to create a scene for. On a piece of paper, brainstorm with your child what the scenery might look like in his habitat (icebergs, trees, mountains etc). What kinds of plants and the animals live in that particular habitat? He can draw a sketch of what he wants his habitat to look like, to use as a guide.
3. Cut the white paper to fit so that you can line the inside of shoebox with it. Discard the lid of the shoebox and flip the shoebox on its side so that the bottom of box (the largest side) is now the main background area. Have your child use markers and crayons to draw the background scenery for his habitat on white paper (Note: do this before you glue it to the shoebox). Let him use that creative instinct of his! He can decorate the background of his habitat however he likes. Encourage him to decorate pieces of paper for all of the sides of the shoebox for his habitat to create one cohesive scene.
4. Help him glue the paper onto the inside of the shoebox.
5. Help your child create the ground for the habitat. For a grassland habitat, you can use Easter grass for the ground. For an arctic habitat, glue white construction paper or some cotton balls to the bottom of the shoebox. For a desert habitat, you can glue sand to the bottom of the shoebox. For an ocean habitat, you can cover the bottom of the box in blue construction paper or even blue saran wrap and make green seaweed out of construction paper.
6. Now you and your child can add some details to your habitat. Brainstorm with your child the different kinds of things you can use in his scene. For a grassland or desert habitat, you can create a watering hole by painting a small food container blue and placing it in the shoebox. For an arctic habitat, you can create icebergs from empty white egg cartons. For a forest habitat, you can paint cotton balls green and place them on tree trunks made of brown clay. For an ocean habitat, you can make corral or sunken treasures from playdoh. The sky's the limit! Let his imagination run

wild!

7. Now it's time to add animals to your habitat. You can use toy animals that your child may already have or he can create his own. To create animals, you can either have your child draw the animals on some cardstock or you can print some animals onto paper from the computer.
8. Help your child cut the animals out and cut a small slit at the base of each. Cut out a small half circle from the white paper for the base of each animal and cut a slit on the curved side of the half circle. Connect the slit on the half circle to the slit on the bottom of the animal to make a stand. If he doesn't want to make animals out of paper, he can also make them out of playdoh.
9. Encourage your child to create stories and scenes within his habitat. After he is done playing with it, keep it in a safe spot to bring out on another day. You and your child can make many of these shoebox scenes; one for each different kind of habitat!

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