

Animal Movements

This activity uses movement to get students thinking about animal adaptations. How do animals move? Can we move the same way they do? What about their bodies lets them do the things they do to survive? This comes straight out of our Zoo Animals and Teaching the Elementary Curriculum course, so if you like this, consider learning more fun ways to explore science in engaging and hands on ways with our Zoo Animals professional learning course running April 13-18 online!

Materials:

- Animal Movement Worksheets

Process:

1. Animals move in all different and amazing ways. In this activity we will move like animals and discover how adaptations can make all the difference.
2. Let's transform ourselves into animals and see what it's like to move like they move!
3. Students can follow the Animal Movement Worksheets to learn about the animal movements, watch video clips of the animals, and then try it themselves to see how they compare!
4. If students have the ability to, encourage them to share videos of themselves as they act like the animals with their friends and classmates!
5. Discuss how they did with each movement and why they felt more or less successful at some movements? What might be different about the animals' bodies? What adaptations can they notice about these animals by doing this activity? Were there adaptations they wished they had to help them do the movements like the animals? What are some movements that our human adaptations help us to do really well?
6. Once the students have moved like all the animals on their sheet, encourage them to pick a new animal to observe and research – a pet, a local wild animal, or another animal video and share their chosen movement with their friends and classmates!

Animal Movement Worksheets

Animal 1: Flamingo



Flamingos can stand on one leg for more than 4 hours at a time. Scientists speculate that flamingos stand on one leg to allow the raised leg to dry. Also, standing on one leg enables flamingos to conserve body heat and energy. The flamingos long legs allow for a great surface area to lose heat, so by tucking one leg close to their body, they are conserving body heat.

[Watch this video of a baby flamingo practicing standing on one leg!](#)

Now TRY IT!

How long can you stand on one leg before losing your balance? Time yourself and record your longest time here: _____

Were you able to stand on one leg for as long as a flamingo?

What adaptations might help you?

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Animal 2: Coquerel's Sifaka Lemur



Coquerel's Sifaka (shee-FA-ka) are lemurs from Madagascar. They are designed for an arboreal, or tree-dwelling, lifestyle. In fact, sifakas spend so much time in trees that when they are on the ground, they move in an unusual way. They do a skipping "dance" on their hind legs, keeping their arms out for balance.

[Watch this video of a sifaka skipping along!](#)

Now TRY IT!

Can you skip like a sifaka?

What adaptations do you share with a sifaka?

Animal 3: Hummingbird



Hummingbirds are well known for their ability to hover in place by flapping their wings in a figure eight motion, which provides lift in both directions. In order to maintain a hovering position, hummingbirds need to flap their wings very quickly, and the smaller the species, the more times it needs to flap its wings per second. The ruby-throated hummingbird can flap its wings around 50 times per second in normal flight.

[Watch this video of a hummingbird hovering](#) (you can just watch the first 1.5 minutes)

Now TRY IT!

Can you flap your arms as many times as a hummingbird can flap its wings per second?

Count how many times you can flap in 1 second: _____

Do you think the hummingbird has special adaptations that help it fly this way?

Animal 4: Red-Crowned Crane



Red-crowned cranes have a courtship ritual that looks like an elaborate dance. Both males and females bow, prance, and leap high into the air.

[Watch this video of cranes dancing](#)

Now TRY IT!

Create your most elaborate crane dance using your whole body.

Does your dance look the same as the cranes?

What can you do the same and different from a crane?

How does your body compare to a crane's?

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Animal 5: Emperor Penguin



Emperor penguins don't have nests. They balance their egg on their feet, keeping it warm under a pouch of fatty skin under their belly. Once it hatches, they continue to carry the chick in the same way. While all penguins waddle, emperor penguins take waddling to the extreme. They can waddle while balancing their chick between their feet.

[Watch this video of a penguin waddling with its chick](#)

Now TRY IT!

Use a small stuffed animal or a ball about the size of a baseball to act as either your chick or egg.

How far can you waddle while balancing your baby on your feet like an emperor penguin?

What adaptations do you think a penguin has to make it so good at this?

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Animal 6: African Wild Dog



African wild dogs do a lot of stretching! Why? Sometimes it's for the same reason humans do – to get the blood flowing after a nap. They also sometimes use it as an invitation to play.

[Watch this video of a wild dog stretching](#)

Now TRY IT!

Stretch your body like an African Wild Dog does.

Do you feel the blood flowing easier in your body?

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Animal 7: Ostrich



Ostriches can't fly, but they sure can run! They can easily reach speeds over 40 mph. This is helpful when defending a territory that covers over 20 miles.

[Watch this video of an ostrich running](#)

Now TRY IT!

Sprint as fast as you can for 5 seconds.

How far can you run in that amount of time?

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Animal 8: Tiger



Tigers are great jumpers! They can leap up to 15 feet from a standstill.

[Watch this video of a tiger jumping](#)

Now TRY IT!

Stand with both feet together and jump as high as you can.

Could you reach a tree branch 15 feet off the ground?