



NYSDEC Environmental Education

What Class Are You In?

Group Size	One class
Duration	20-30 minutes
Concept	Classification, Animals, Craft
Location	Classroom
Age/grade	Pre-K (with modifications) through 2nd

Objectives Students be able to explain different characteristics of animals.
Students will organize animals by similar traits.

Materials Magazine clippings or clip art of many different and familiar species of animals (clip art included – see attached sheets)
Images of imaginary classrooms (included- see attached sheets)
Tape or glue
Scissors
Crayons (optional)

Procedures

If the class is going to select their own magazine clippings, allow additional time for the students to pore through nature magazines and cut out pictures.

Students' familiarity with animals will vary. Adjust for your class.

Explain to the students that animals have different adaptations, or characteristics. For example, some animals have wings. Have students name some. Some animals have spines. Again, have students name some.

Groups of animals have similar parts or look alike. Sometimes it can be tricky, though. For example, even though a snake and an eel look similar, they're different types of animals. Scientists have organized animals together into groups. We're going to figure out the five groups of animals that have bones. These groups are mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish.

The following table may help differentiate the five groups. You may want to do a similar table on the board before the activity. Some classes can have the students make suggestions on what categories to use.

	Fish	Amphibians	Reptiles	Birds	Mammals
Covering	scales	skin	scales	feathers	fur
Parts	Fins	Four legs	Four legs (or none!)	Two legs and two wings	Four legs (except bats!)
Lays Eggs?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Breathes Air?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Has Claws?	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Warm or Cold Blooded?	Cold	Cold	Cold	Warm	Warm

Some of the concepts may be outside of your students' experience. Be wary of 'exceptions' to the rules; for example, a platypus is a mammal that lays eggs, guppies are fish that have live-birth. Dolphins and whales don't look like they have fur. (One tricky one is salamanders (amphibians) vs lizards (reptiles). Lizards have scales and claws, salamanders don't.) If you don't want to generalize, it might be better to discuss this rather than build a table.

Once the students have a set of animals, they can begin attaching their images into the proper class. We suggest that each class winds up with at least four 'students' at the desks.

After the students have taped or glued the animals into the classes, they can add a 'teacher' to each class. They can simply attach a fifth animal into each page, next to the chalkboard; or they could draw their own fish, mammal, bird, amphibian or reptile, cut it out, and insert it into the page.

Alternative: You can make up five large poster sheets to represent each animal class, similar to the ones we did on a single page. Each student can receive/select/sketch one animal of one of the five classes, and attach that animal to the large poster.















		
		
		
		

