

ANIMAL HIDE & SEEK

Learn about different types of animal camouflage

What you'll need:

- Toy animals (plastic, stuffed or homemade)
- At least one family member to play with

Create:

1. To play this game, gather your favourite toy animal(s). You can play with as many toys as you'd like.
2. Try to hide each animal toy in plain sight. Don't tuck your toy away into a cupboard, drawer or other hiding place. Instead, try to hide your animal by blending it in with its surroundings. Think about the pattern or colour of each toy—what would the best hiding spot be?
3. Ask one or more of your family members to try and spot your hidden toy(s).
4. Hide the same animal in different locations against different backgrounds and patterns. Is it easier to find in some spots than others? Why or why not?



Play:

As you're playing hide and seek with your animals, pay close attention to which hiding spots work best. If you can't find a good spot for one of your toys, think about what type of environment that animal would need to camouflage itself. For example, a green frog might hide well in the leaves of a house plant, while a patterned snake might find it easy to blend in with a piece of clothing or furniture with similar colours.

If you can't find the perfect spot to camouflage one of your animals, why not make it? Use your construction paper, markers and other craft materials to create a natural habitat where your favourite creatures can stay hidden away!



Learn:



Animals use different methods of **camouflaging** in the wild to blend into their environments. Some animals use camouflage to protect themselves from predators, while others use it to sneak up on prey.



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Blending into the background

Some animals change their colours to **blend** into their background. The Arctic hare is a master of this type of blending. In the winter, the Arctic hare has white fur to blend in with the snow. When the weather gets warmer, the hare's fur changes to brown to blend in with the dead grass and other plants.



Relying on patterns

Other animals rely on their **patterns** to camouflage into tall grass, tree bark or other specific environments. The mossy leaf-tailed gecko has patterns on its skin that look like moss and bark. It can even change its skin to match a particular tree trunk! This creature lives in the forests of Madagascar. You can find it in the trees, where it hides from predators and sneaks up on insects to eat.



Living in disguise

Another kind of camouflage is **disguise**, which means the animal looks like a completely different animal or plant. For example, the stick insect has a twig-like body that can be either brown or green. This disguise is so convincing that the stick insect is virtually invisible to any passing predator. There are more than 3,000 species of stick insects around the world, ranging in size from 11.6 mm to 62.4 cm. The largest stick insect, which can be found in Malaysia, is called Chan's megastick.



Mimicking other animals

Finally, some animals use **mimicry** to "dress up" as another animal. Take, for example, the hoverfly. This creature has yellow stripes that make it look like a bee or wasp. This discourages birds and other predators from trying to eat it, since the predator doesn't want to be stung. However, the hoverfly actually can't sting at all! Hoverflies are very important pollinators, just like bees, and their larvae help farmers by eating pest insects like aphids.



Did you know?



One very interesting animal is known for its ability to impersonate other creatures. The mimic octopus, which was discovered off the coast of Indonesia, has been documented impersonating several different sea creatures, including three venomous ones: the zebra sole, lionfish and sea snake. By acting like a venomous creature, the mimic octopus makes itself less noticeable to predators.