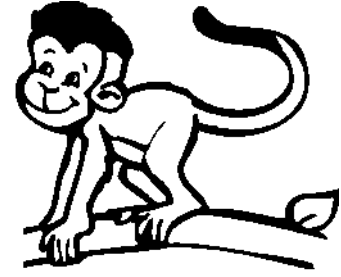


Setting Up a ZOO ANIMALS Learning Center



The Zoo Animal Learning Center is an inviting and stimulating special interest annex that enriches the classroom work in the Unit. It should be available to students at all times as they work on lessons or independent projects that you assign or that they initiate. Add your own ideas to the following list of suggestions and add to it as the Unit progresses. Keep a record for yourself of its contents to use in upcoming years.

- **Begin** gathering your ideas for putting together a special interest center in your classroom a few weeks before beginning the Unit on Zoo Animals.
- **Choose** a site that is convenient for a few students to work separately from the rest of the class. Set up a table top large enough for displays and a work area. A bulletin board along the wall is good, as are shelves for displaying books, games, etc. Have storage boxes with lids on the floor for files, magazine, etc. (these could be permanent storage places for you). Place round bins under the table for toys, counters, or manipulatives.
- **Make** a big sign or poster announcing the topic, perhaps with a catchy name. You could also hang banners saying "Book Making," "Supplies," "Art Materials," "Books," to liven up the area.
- **Contact** your school and local city librarians to let them know that you will be beginning a Zoo Animal Unit soon; ask them to begin gathering both non-fiction and picture books and reserving them for you.
- **Arrange** the books on a shelf separated into fiction and nonfiction titles and in alphabetical order by author. Ask students to replace the books correctly to make it easier for others to find them. To encourage good library habits, leave a box of cards or a sign-out sheet near the books so students can check them out of the classroom.
- **Provide** games; look for games and simple jigsaw puzzles, plastic toys (a Barrel of Monkeys), and models, and counters or manipulatives in the shape of zoo animals.
- **Arrange** shelves and bins so they are accessible to all of the students.
- **Hang** interesting lightweight objects from the ceiling, if possible, such as a stuffed zoo animal or mobile made from bear Cutouts from a previous year, or that you made as samples.
- **Have** boxes for art supplies, horizontal stacking file bins for papers and materials to make books, and a place for instruction sheets and independent assignment suggestions. Use large coffee cans (all sharp edges removed, covered with contact paper) to store tools needed for activities such as scissors, pencils, rulers, and glue.
- **Show** reduced samples of the Learning Page Fact Files on the bulletin board, pasted on colored construction paper and fanned out. Post maps, student artwork and other eye-catching materials to make the Center more inviting. Be creative!
- **Involve** the parents. Send a note home asking for suggestions and the loan of items related to zoo animals. (Be sure items are labeled and returned at the end of the Unit.) Perhaps a parent has expertise in the field or knows someone with expertise who can come in and talk to the class.
- **Materials to collect:** This should be an ongoing effort throughout the year. Save and solicit donations of rinsed clean meat trays, paper milk cartons, plastic fruit baskets; yarn and fabric scraps, egg cartons, shoe boxes; ice cream and tongue depressor sticks; printers are a good source of leftover paper. There are many discount chain stores that carry craft supplies such as craft felt and "googly" eyes. And don't forget animal crackers; large containers are available at membership discount warehouses. Animal crackers are good for counting, estimating numbers, grouping, sorting—the possibilities are endless! And don't forget eating!!