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## Hoptoad Habitats: Hide n' Peep

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**Summary:** This game demonstrates through participation that frogs call to potential mates with a voice unique to each species. Students will gain an appreciation and understanding of the amphibians they hear each spring and summer.

**Objective:** Students will understand that frogs call to attract a mate, and that each species has a unique call which can be identified by other frogs as well as biologists.

**Grades:** 3-5

**Subject:** Science, language

**Skills:** communication

**Materials:** Game cards, gummy worms (or a similar prize for the winning “frogs”), suitable location for hide-and- seek (preferably outside near water), frog calls (optional), Internet access (optional)

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### **Activity**

#### Background

Frogs and toads are often heard before they are seen. Their musical voices fill the evening air spring through summer. One of the earliest heralds of spring is not the robin, but a robust chorus of spring peepers in March. As spring progresses, the night air is filled with the calls of the gray tree frog, and then the musical trill of the American toad. Summer is marked by the low rumbles of the bullfrog, and the banjo-plucking call of the green frog. Since each species has its own distinctive call, you can tell what frogs are nearby without ever seeing them.

Why do all these frogs sing anyway? Their calls are to attract a mate of the opposite sex. By announcing their presence, male frogs tell nearby females “Here I am!” Females can then find a male they think is suitable, and breed. Since the eggs need to be in or near water, most calling occurs here as well.

#### The Game



1. Set up the atmosphere by asking the students to sit in a circle, close their eyes, and use their imagination to visit Peeping Pond. It is an early summer night; is it warm or cool? Let students answer each question. Is it pitch dark, or is there a full moon tonight? Do you hear anything? What does it sound like? Do you feel anything? A breeze, water in your shoes, grass tickling your legs?

2. Now announce that students will play frogs of different species that live at Peeping Pond. For a class of 20, there should be four duplicates of each call (cards follow on page 3). Ask students why frogs call? Explain that calls are used to locate other frogs of the same species for breeding. For instance, bullfrogs are calling to attract female bullfrogs, and spring peepers are calling for other spring peepers. Then tell them that each student will play a special type of frog, and they must make the sound as described on their card. Ask the entire class to make their call at the same time for practice. Peeping Pond is getting pretty loud!

3. Now instruct the class that they will play a game of hide n' seek around the marked area (give guidelines as to area), but they are to find other frogs of the same species based on their calls alone. Everyone must make their frog calls, and the frogs that find all of their species first are the winners. For instance, all the peepers must find each other based on the Peep-peep call, all the bullfrogs based on the jug-o-rum, etc. Whichever team joins up first wins control of the entire Peeping Pond. Gummy worms are an appropriate prize. Have students spread out first before calling, and then count down to sunset. Once the sun sets, let the calling begin!

4. For actual frog calls, there are a number of recordings that can be purchased through a large book store or nature store. These can be played while students close their eyes, or during the calling game. Students can also visit the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's webpage for on-line vocals at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/kids/frogsforkids.html#mnfrogs>.

Game Cards

Jug-o-rum  
(bullfrog)

High-pitched Trill  
(American toad)

Snore  
(leopard frog)

Peep-peep  
Peep-peep  
(spring peeper)

Low-pitched trill  
(gray tree frog)