
Hoptoad Habitats: Toads Together

Summary: This activity introduces the concept of habitat and the basic needs of all wildlife. Students will brainstorm in teams to determine these needs for a common amphibian, the American toad. This knowledge will prepare students for “Welcome Wildlife” and the “Puddle Jumpers” field study visit.

Objective: Students will understand the concept of habitat as food, water, shelter, and space, with an emphasis on the American toad, and/or other species. They will use this understanding to develop ways to improve amphibian habitat in their community.

Grades: 3-5

Subject: Science, language

Skills: teamwork, communication, habitat design

Materials: pencil, paper

Activity

1. To get a basic understanding of what a toad needs to live, we can look at what comprises a habitat. Students may work in groups; each student will number off by four (or a suitable number for the class), and all of the same numbers form a group. This will encourage interaction with other students and build teamwork skills.
2. Each team will make four columns on a sheet of paper, one for food, water, shelter, and space. In the group, one student should take notes, and another be prepared to write them on the board. Then the teams will brainstorm the possibilities to each of these habitat requirements for the toad. Encourage them to think like a toad, from a toad’s perspective. Answers to one of the questions can also help answer another. For instance, if you think you know what a toad eats, this may help you decide where it lives and finds shelter.
3. The following questions may help students think about these needs, and paint a picture of a toad’s habitat. The focus questions may be given by the teacher as needed, or written on the board to stimulate thought.

*What does a toad eat?
How does he get his food?*



*Where does he find shelter in the summer?
In the winter?
Where does he get water?
What does he need water for?
How much space does he need?
What about the tadpoles?
What can we do to help make a home for toads?*

4. Once students have had ample time to brainstorm, a representative chosen by the students from each group will write their answers on the board under the appropriate category. The group can then discuss their answers, why they considered it, and if there are any questions or issues with their choices. Leave the answers on the board for the next activity.
5. Let students discuss ways each of these needs can be met in the student's backyard, the school grounds, or a nearby park. Some ideas they may think of include:
 - Not mowing along the edge of woods (food and shelter)
 - Creating or protecting shallow pools of water (tadpoles)
 - Planting flowers and grasses that attract insects (food and shelter)
 - Building a pond
 - Building a Toad House (see Enrichment)
 - Putting up Toad lights (food)
6. Another amphibian species can be used for this activity instead of the toad, such as the bullfrog or a salamander, or for a follow-up activity or extension. The American toad was chosen since it is common to most areas and various habitats, and is easy to attract through habitat modifications, as discussed in the next optional activity, "Welcome Toads".