

Very Beary Animal Scat Challenge

Bear Fest 2020

Try out this fun, play-based, approach to learning the shape and size of different animal scats, while also thinking about the food resources available to different animals in your ecosystem.

Time: 1-2 hours

Ages: All ages

Activity:

Part 1: Use chocolate playdough to create animal scat shapes. Mix natural materials into the playdough to represent different food items animals eat.

Part 2: Play a matching game with a partner to match different animal scats with their toy animal or picture.



Materials:

1. No-Cook Chocolate Playdough
 - 2 cups all-purpose flour
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of salt
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cocoa powder
 - 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups hot water
 - 3 Tbl vegetable oil
2. Plastic animals or pictures matching the scats you will make.
3. Items from nature to represent food items: berries, twigs, grasses, seeds, etc.
4. Paper Plates or flat containers
5. Scat book or website with different animal scats.
6. Ruler (optional)

Directions

Making animal scat:

1. Make playdough: Mix flour, salt, and cocoa powder together in a bowl. Add oil and hot water. Mix thoroughly with your hands once water has cooled. Place playdough in a plastic bag or tub to maintain moisture.
2. Collect different toy animals (or pictures) of which you may see animal scat in your local ecosystem. Such as bear, coyote, deer, elk, mountain lion, etc. You can add some animals, like a dinosaur, for fun!

3. You will be making scat for those animals. Next, go outside and collect items from nature to represent food those animals eat. Items can be realistic, such as juniper berries or grasses, as many animals eat those, or you can collect something to represent an item such as fur or bones.

Examples:

- Dried crabapples, rosehips, and juniper berries
 - Grass and other small plants
 - Small twigs to represent bones
 - Pussy willows, other tree buds, or dried grass to represent fur
 - Small seeds or shiny rocks to represent insect parts
4. Set out your animals, playdough, and natural items. Make scat for each animal by mixing in different items to represent the food they have eaten, and then form the realistic sizes and shapes for each animal scat. Refer to a track book or website if you are unsure about size and shape for different animal scats. Using a ruler can help children estimate how big their scat should be.

Scat Matching Challenge:

5. Have your group make pairs. Have one partner set out each of their scats on different plates, while the other partner steps away. Group the toy animals together on the side.
6. The partner can then come over and attempt to match each toy animal to the correct scat. Challenge the partner to identify the different food items in each scat.
7. The partners switch and allow the other partner to match scats.

Extension questions

- a. What clues helped you match the scat to each animal?
- b. How does the size of scat help determine what animal it came from?
- c. What are important animal food sources in our environment?
- d. Do you think it's hard for animal to find food sometimes? What might affect food sources for different animals?



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