Animal Shapes and Sizes  
3 year olds  
July 2013

Theme: Different shapes and sizes can be found in nature.

Objectives:
- Recognize and identify at least 5 different shapes.
- Meet two animals with unusual shapes or sizes and name at least one way each shape or size helps the animal.
- Develop gross and fine motor skills.
- Encourage a sense of wonder in wildlife.

Welcome/Name that Shape! (5 minutes)
- Need: Foam cut into different shapes, pillowcase
- Directions:
  1. Welcome the children and parents to “Animal Shapes and Sizes”.
  2. Introduce instructors and teens, and allow each child to share their name.
  3. Play a game with the kids by asking for volunteers to pull a shape out of the pillowcase. Ask the group to identify it and then place it in the circle. Can have kids do a drumroll while each volunteer gets a shape out.
  4. Once all the shapes are out, point to shapes randomly and have kids say shape to reinforce the names.
  5. Finally, show pictures of animals, that each illustrates a shape that they have learned. The shape will be drawn on the picture to help the kids identify it on the animal. I will try to have the following pictures: penguin (triangle), turtle (circle), bear (rectangle), insect (oval), tiger (square)

Feeding Time at the Zoo! (10 min)
- Need: bag of 5 foam shapes hidden under each carpet square, animal shape pictures on wall, container or plate under each picture.
- Directions:
  1. Tape up the pictures of each animal shape and place a container underneath each one.
  2. Ask kids to look around the room and see what animals and shapes they see.
  3. Explain to the kids that they are going to be zoo keepers for the day. One of their jobs is to feed the animals! These animals are “picky” eaters, though and only eat food that is shapes like them! Identify each animal’s shape.
  4. Next, have them look under their carpet squares for their “food”. Encourage them to take their food and put it on the plate of the proper animal.
  5. Once all are done, review what shape each animal represented.

Whose Footprint is this? (10 minutes)
- Need: picture of animals (penguin, elephant, polar bear, giraffe, lion, and butterfly) and the corresponding footprint
- Directions:
  1. Place the pictures of the animals around the room. Place the corresponding footprint next to the picture.
2. Ask the kids to take off one shoe. As they are doing that, talk about how animals come in different sizes and often, the bigger the animal, the bigger the footprint.

3. Ask your “little zoo keepers” to compare their footprint with the animal footprints. With help from their parent, allow children to visit each animal/footprint and stand on it to see how their own footprint compares. Encourage them to look at the size, shape, number of toes, etc. of each print.

4. Once they have visited each footprint, have them sit down and briefly review what animal made each footprint and something interesting or unusual about the footprint.

   - Penguin: webbed to propel them when swimming
   - Elephant: round and big to support weight
   - Polar bear: Claws to help with traction when walking on ice
   - Giraffe: Hoof
   - Lion: Claws are retractable
   - Butterfly: tiny and has 6 feet!

**Animal Encounters (15 minutes)**

- **Need:** alligator, skink or bearded dragon, ball python or armadillo
- **Focus:** the shapes/sizes of each animal as well as interesting facts about each.

**Alligator**
- Round eyes to look for dinner or danger! They are on top of his head to help him see while hiding in the water
- Triangular snout – perfect for snapping at food like frogs and turtles. Can have kids pretend to snap at something, using their arms to make alligator jaws
- Round bumps on chin – are sensory organs that detect motion
- Although small right now, is going to keep growing! Will reach over 12 feet when adult. The largest alligator ever recorded was 19 feet 2 inches long and was found in Louisiana. The rate they grow depends on temperature and food availability.

**Crocodile Skink**
- Has round “circle” eyes”. In addition, has unique orange-colored ring around each eye. Possible reasons include to appear bigger than it is, to startle and scare away predators, for courtship.
- Has triangular head
- When alarmed, it makes a high-pitched yelping noise and may expel waste matter from its intestines. This combination is enough to startle any predator!

**Armadillo**
- Can curl up into a ball with head and tail fitting like a lock and key. (Only species of armadillo that can do this)
- Shape helps protect it from predators much like a turtle in its shell
- Shell also helps keep it warm in cooler weather
- Runs on it claws/toenails but tends to not dig with them – uses empty burrows left by other animals.
- Loves to eat termites and ants

**Ball Python**
- Can get to be 5 feet long
• When threatened, snakes have a variety of defenses. For many, a quick retreat is the best defense. Others may attempt to bite or even roll over and play dead. For ball pythons, rolling into a ball and protecting the head is defense.
• Are non-venomous and kill their prey by constriction
• Female pythons “incubate” their eggs by coiling around them.

Craft Time – Penguin Shape put together (5 minutes)