

Using Common Sense

In this activity, children become away of their senses and how creatures must rely on theirs for survival.

The objective is:

- to make observations using their senses
- to correlate their experience to the creatures who must survive

Background:	One of the most basic survival skills is observation. Most people think of seeing as observation, but it really includes using all the senses and interpreting what is seen, heard, felt, tasted, and smelled. This activity is very rewarding when it is done in a familiar environment. It's amazing how much we miss when we think we know our surroundings.
Skills:	Students should be able to sit quietly for about ten minutes at a time. They should also be able to write or draw what they observe.
Age:	Grades 3 – 7 (can be extended to include younger or older children)
Materials	Note pads and pencils, blindfolds, cotton balls or ear plugs
Activity:	<p>Ask the children how do the animals and birds know when a predator is around. How do they know where to find their food?</p> <p>Tell the children that they are to think of themselves as an animal. They should write down everything they hear, see, and smell. (They do not have to identify by species, bird calls and the number of different types will do.)</p> <p>Place each child in a study site where they are a few feet from each other. Let them sit quietly for about 10 minutes.</p>
Discussion:	<p>Bring the children back together and ask them to identify what they heard, saw, and smelled. Was any one sense easier for them to use than the others were? Can animals and birds hear, see, or smell better than humans? (Not always. Some animals have one sense is very strong to make up for the ones that are weaker.)</p> <p>Now do the activity again. This time blindfold some of the children and use cotton balls or ear plugs on others. Compare the results when one of the senses is taken away.</p>