

Create a Zoo Habitat



All zoo habitats are not alike. Each is designed to meet the specific needs of the animals that live there. An environment that's specially tailored to giraffes, for example, would be all wrong for otters.

Zoo habitat design begins with research. What type of animal will live in this habitat? Is it a bird, mammal, reptile, or amphibian? Does it fly, swim, climb, or dig? What does it eat? What can you learn about its behavior and natural habitat?

For this activity, you'll use items you can find around your home or yard to create a model zoo habitat.

Possible materials:

Shoeboxes, tissue boxes, or other types of boxes

Pinecones, twigs

Construction paper

Markers, colored pencils

Toilet paper or paper towel rolls

Clay (you can find easy DIY clay recipes online)

Yarn or string

Toy animals or action figures, building toys

Glue

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Instructions:

1. Pick your favorite animal.

2. Research the animal species you've selected. What does it need to keep it healthy in human care? "Enrichment" is an important aspect of exhibit design. Enrichment takes many forms, including specialized "toys" such as puzzle-feeders or climbing apparatus. The goal of enrichment is to stimulate an animal's senses and encourage exploration and other natural behaviors. What can you put in your exhibit to keep the animals engaged every day?

3. Create a simple design plan. Will your habitat have trees? Water? Rocks? A moat? A fence? Is there dirt, grass, etc.? As you make these choices, think about what you've learned about your chosen animal species. For example:

The __ (animal name) __ spends a great deal of its time (climbing, swimming, etc.), so this habitat will include _____. In order to encourage its natural behavior, I will include _____ in the exhibit.

4. Start creating! If you don't have traditional craft supplies on hand, don't worry! Now's the time to look around your home and get creative!

5. We want to see your exhibits! Take photos, or perhaps film a video presentation in which you show off your habitat and explain the whys of your design choices. Post on social media and be sure to tag us @LAZoo. We'll feature some of your exhibits on the L.A. Zoo website or in our quarterly member magazine, Zoo View.