

## What's Under the Ocean?

### Objectives:

1. To role play the behavior of three marine animals
2. To act out the differences in hunting styles between sea anemones and catfish

**Learning Skills:** motor and cognition development, physical education

### Background:

Animals show many different adaptations that help them catch and eat food. There are some animals like the sea anemone that are sedentary. As small animals drift through the water, sea anemones use their tentacles to catch their food. There are many animals that chase their prey. For example, some sharks swim after fish. Animals need to balance the energy used when catching food with the energy gained when eating what is caught to survive. For instance if a shark swam very fast and caught only a small amount of food it would eventually starve. Then what do most animals do? They swim slowly at first to conserve energy until they are close enough to catch food. Here are a few role-playing suggestions for younger children (of course it all depends on the availability of our animals and other animals may be substituted). Sea turtle: hands and arms become flippers, feet become flippers, mouths become beaks, clothes become a hard carapace; actions include swimming, lifting head out of water to breathe, using flippers to help crawl up a sandy beach to lay eggs. Seastar: use arms, legs and head as appendages, clothes become hard outer surface, mouth on stomach side; actions include the tendency of the starfish to move very slowly, can imitate how a starfish turns itself over when upside-down. Catfish: hands and arms become fins, legs become tail, fingers become whiskers, body shape is fusiform; actions include swimming, finding food with whiskers. You may ask, "How many of you have seen a stingray?" (We do not have one here. We only have small animals.) Stingray: hands and arms become fins, feet become tail, clothes become skin and scales; actions include swimming and hiding in sand.



**Vocabulary:** sea turtle, starfish, sea anemone, tentacles, catfish, whiskers, shark, tentacles, fins, tails, flippers, shell (carapace)

**Materials:** sea turtle area and aquarium area, bubble maker, underwater magnifying aids

**Methodology:**

1. Short introduction to Culebra. "Hi kids! What makes Culebra so special? (Have kids give answers to questions) What's under the ocean? (More answers) Do you want to go find out? Well, let your new teachers for the day help you. This is .... and I am ...".
2. The activity may occur both at the turtle tank and aquarium. Remember to select three sea friends to talk about. This also depends on the age. If you visit the sea turtles, there are many characteristics of the sea turtle one can discuss. For example, the shape of flippers, count the flippers, how the sea turtle swims, how it breathes, colors of shell, number of sea turtles in aquarium, etc.
3. Once you get to the aquarium there are other sea animals to see. Have students familiarize themselves with sea animals by using touch tanks (if available) and/or looking through magnifying aids. They really love these instruments even if their magnification power is barely noticed.
4. Introduce them to at least three other animals like the sea anemone, catfish and starfish. See background information for what characteristics to emphasize.
5. Now we are ready to play the first activity that will review several of the sea animal's natural behaviors such as swimming, breathing, and eating.
6. Before beginning activity, review the animals the students saw.
7. Have students sit in a circle. Tell them they are going to pretend to be ocean animals. Select an animal and ask all the students to "jump into the ocean."
8. If you select the sea turtle, the students can pretend to grow the correct body parts- flippers, beak, or shell. Encourage students to use their arms, legs, and head to imitate these sea animals and to "swim around the ocean." You may also ask them to occasionally breathe or eat.
9. After a few minutes, say "freeze." All students need to stop moving and when they have, introduce the next animal and begin role-playing again.
10. Continue this with as many animals you feel students have learned.
11. Begin next activity. This activity will help show students how much easier it is to capture food if you can move.

12. Again form a circle. One student will be in the middle of the circle.
13. Describe what sea anemones look like. Show how these animals wave their tentacles to catch food. Have the students become sea anemones and practice while seated.
14. Now the center student is ready to blow bubbles. Tell the students that bubbles represent food, and they must stay seated as they catch the food.
15. After a few minutes, ask students how they felt catching food while seated. Was it easy? Did you get enough to "eat"?
16. Now a different animal will be brought to the circle.
17. Before asking students to become catfish, describe how catfish swim to catch their food. Begin making bubbles, and students may stand up and walk or run to catch their food.
18. After a few minutes, ask students how they felt being catfish. Was it easier to catch food? Did they catch more?
19. Did they get tired and out of breath?

**Extensions in classroom:**

- Have students make a coloring book with all the animals they saw while on their marine excursion.
- If learning the alphabet, can place letter of animal under each picture.
- Try to have students color animals in their real colors.
- If students are more advanced they can even write the animals names out and a sentence or two about the animal.

**Evaluation:** At the end of the activity, students will role play the behaviors of the different marine animals. Docents may ask questions like: How does the sea turtle swim? Where are your flippers?, Where is your beak? What color are you?, How do you breathe? In the aquarium, you may say, "Which animal has 5 arms? Show them to us. What is the name of this animal that looks like spaghetti? Can it move? How does it eat? What are its arms called? Where is its mouth? Where is your mouth? What about the "meow meow" fish? What is its real name? Why does it look like a cat? What does it use its whiskers for? Where are your whiskers? Who do we know that visits us at Christmas time that has whiskers? Select concepts you emphasized to evaluate the student's learning.

**References:**

Adapted from SeaWorld Activity