



The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™
ACTIVITY
EXPLORING ANIMAL CAMOUFLAGE



KQED

pbsparents.com/catinthehat/



The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™

ACTIVITY

EXPLORING ANIMAL CAMOUFLAGE

Overview

When you were out together, have you and your child ever been startled by a bird that seemed to suddenly appear out of the brush? Some birds, insects, and other animals have body colors and patterns that make them appear to blend in to their surroundings. You can help your child learn more about protective coloration in animals by exploring the animals around your home and neighborhood. You can also have fun together playing the game “Now You See Me, Now You Don’t!”



The Science Idea

Camouflage is an adaptation that helps many animals avoid detection by predators or prey because it allows them to blend in to their natural environments. Camouflage means that colors, designs, or patterns on an animal’s body or the shapes of its body parts are similar to the colors, designs, patterns, or shapes in the background. For example, a walking stick insect is colored and shaped like a stick.

Skills: Identifying patterns and relationships; developing ideas; communicating and collaborating
Age: 3–6 year olds

What to Do

- [Playing Hide-and-Seek](#)
- [Observing Animals Outside](#)
- [Take It Further](#)

Getting Ready

When you and your child are outdoors, look for animals that use camouflage. In grass, you may find a variety of insects and small creatures like grasshoppers, praying mantises, caterpillars, snails, and butterflies. In the dirt, you may find salamanders and worms. If there is a wilder area, you may be able to observe larger animals that use camouflage like toads and frogs, many kinds of turtles, rabbits, or even deer. If you live in an urban area, use the resources below for help finding animals to observe.



The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™

ACTIVITY

EXPLORING ANIMAL CAMOUFLAGE

Playing Hide-and-Seek

When your child has friends over, invite them all to play a game of hide-and-seek in an enclosed area. Once everyone has had a turn as seeker, talk about what made it easy or hard to find someone. Ask questions like “Did the color of the clothes you were wearing make a difference?” and make comments like “I don’t think I would have noticed you except I saw your red shirt sticking out.”

Observing Animals Outside

What You Need:

- Spoons for digging
- Small plastic containers for holding insects or other small animals temporarily

Ask your child to think about how familiar animals might hide by asking, for example, “What are some ways a turtle could hide?” Invite him to go outside with you to look for animals that hide. Remind him that he will have to look very closely because some of them may be very hard to see.

Take your child on a walk around your home or neighborhood. Invite him to look in the grass for caterpillars, grasshoppers, and other insects. When your child finds one, encourage him to look at it closely and notice details like shape, color, and any markings it has on its body. Ask questions like “What is it doing in the grass or on the leaf?” and “Does it look like it’s trying to hide?”

Invite your child to use a spoon to dig in the ground to find worms. When he finds one, urge him to look at it closely on the dirt, and then lay it out carefully on the grass. What does he notice about its color and shape that was harder to notice before? Encourage him to think about camouflage by asking how he thinks the worm’s color helps it hide in the dirt. What else does the worm do to hide? Introduce the word “camouflage” if you like, but don’t expect your child to use it yet.

Take It Further

Play a camouflage game with your child called “Now You See Me, Now You Don’t!” The game has 2 parts that can be played separately or together. In Part 1, you hide the objects and your child finds them. In Part 2, your child hides the objects from you; part 2 is more difficult. Play the game outdoors at a park or in a meadow and, for added fun, encourage your child to invite

The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™

ACTIVITY

EXPLORING ANIMAL CAMOUFLAGE

a friend or two to join in. Before you play, you will need to prepare some simple materials.

What You Need:

- Construction paper in different shades of colors in nature (for example, light and dark green and brown) and in bright colors (for example, yellow, red, blue, pink, yellow)
- Scissors and tape
- Paper or cloth bags
- Treats for prizes

Now You See Me, Now You Don't! (Part 1)

1. Cut some simple worm shapes out of the different colored construction paper. Cut enough so you have at least 5 shapes of each color per child. Count how many you have so you can keep track of them during the game.
2. While your child is being supervised by another adult, place the “worms” in various places around an outdoor area. Place the green worms and the brown worms on natural surfaces where they will blend in or be camouflaged. Place the blue and red worms (for example) on surfaces where they will be easily seen.
3. Give each child a bag for collecting worms. Show them what a “worm” looks like, and invite them to be frogs or birds looking for and catching the worms and putting them in the bag. The challenge is to find as many worms as they can in 5 minutes. If you have a lot of children, have them work in teams.
4. After 5 minutes call the children in. Count the number of worms in each bag by color. Talk about which colors were easier or harder to find, and why, by asking “Which colors are easier to see in the grass or on the dirt than other colors? Why do you think so?” and “Which colors are harder to see?”
5. If they didn't find all the colors, suggest they continue looking until they do. Now that they know what they are looking for, and are looking more closely, they are sure to find them. Provide a treat for each of the “winners.”

Now You See Me, Now You Don't! (Part 2)

1. Mention to your child that now it's his turn to hide the “worms” on you. Invite him to use the green and brown worms from the previous game or make his own animals to hide. Provide construction paper in different shades of colors in nature, and help him draw and cut out



The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™

ACTIVITY

EXPLORING ANIMAL CAMOUFLAGE

some simple animal shapes.

2. Show your child how to “hide” the animal shapes on outdoor surfaces that match the animals’ colors as closely as possible. Encourage him to hide some independently while you supervise. Urge him to use all available surfaces and encourage him to tape animal shapes to tree branches or plants too.
3. Once all the animal shapes are hidden, go look for them. This will be easier or harder depending on what kinds of colors your child used, what surfaces are available, and how well he hid them. Once you have found as many animal shapes as possible, take them out of the bag and count them with your child.
4. Ask your child to help you find any remaining animal shapes. Maybe he can give you clues like “There is a brown shape in the dirt by the fence.” Talk to him about how easy or hard it was for you to find different animal shapes, depending on their colors and the colors of the background. Ask “How did you decide where to hide the shapes so I wouldn’t find them?” and say, for example, “That dark green insect shape was hard to find on that dark green bush!”
5. Invite your child to camouflage the animal shapes even more by drawing designs or patterns on them. For example, suggest that he draw long lines on a green shape to hide it in the grass or small circles like little rocks on a brown piece to hide in the dirt.

More Information About Camouflage and Worms:

Camouflage games for adults and children to play together: <http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/content/animals/hidden%20animals/Hidden%20Animals.htm>

Animal camouflage photos: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/11/amazing-camouflage-animal_n_316008.html?slidnumber=3#slide_image

Animal camouflage: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1080207/Masters-disguise-Stunning-pictures-tricks-used-creatures-camouflage-themselves.html>

Worms: <http://yucky.discovery.com/flash/worm/pg000102.html>

More Ways to Discover and Learn Go on an Adventure!

Take a family trip to the zoo and look at some big animals that use camouflage like zebras and



The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™

ACTIVITY

EXPLORING ANIMAL CAMOUFLAGE

giraffes. These animals have regular stripes and patterns on their bodies that blend into high grass and dappled light. Invite your child to use [My Animal Observation](#) (below) to draw the animals he sees in different settings.

Literacy Connection

Invite your child to use the worms and other animal shapes from the game to make a book about camouflage. He can use construction paper for the background and then decide what color animal to put on which background. Help him label each picture “Now You See Me!” or “Now You Don’t!”

Look in a Book

Now You See Me . . . (The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That™), by Tish Rabe, illustrated by Christopher Moroney. Random House (available in January 2011).

Peterson First Guide to Urban Wildlife by Sarah B. Landry and Roger Tory Peterson. Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Take a City Nature Walk by Jane Kirkland. Stillwater Publishing, 2005.

The Mixed Up Chameleon by Eric Carle: Harper Collins, 1974, 1985.

New Word

Camouflage: An adaptation that allows a plant or animal to remain undetected in its natural environment by blending in to the surroundings through color, design, or shape of parts

Video

Watch the related video clip at PBS Parents (www.pbsparents.org/catinthehat/)

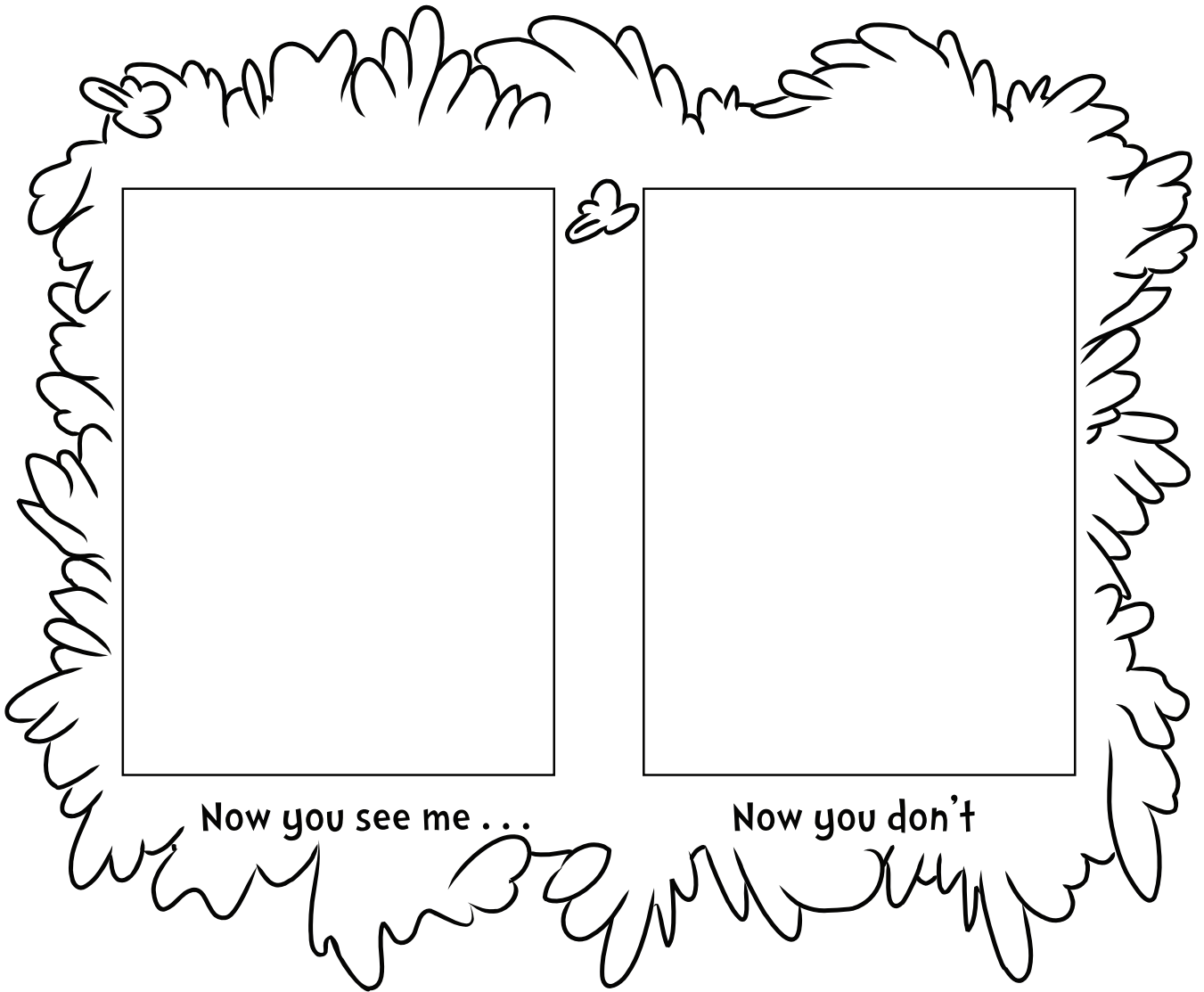
The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™

ACTIVITY

EXPLORING ANIMAL CAMOUFLAGE

My Animal Observation

Can you find the animal?



Now you see me ...

Now you don't

When you are at the zoo, pet store, park, or outside, you can invite your child to observe and draw an animal that uses camouflage. When the animal is clearly visible, encourage your child to draw it in the "Now you see me" box. When that same animal is in a spot where it blends in to the background, encourage your child to draw it in the "Now you don't" box. Remind your child to color in the background!