

Animal Yoga



VIRGINIA
AQUARIUM
& MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

Stretch your way into different animal movements and poses to learn how they move, get food, and protect themselves.

Duration

Preparation: 2 minutes

Activity: 5 – 10 minutes

Supplies

- Yoga mat or beach towel (any soft surface)
- Instructions for animal poses and movement (included)

Background

Animals have many adaptations to help them survive in their **habitat** including **physical adaptations** to help them capture food and **behavioral adaptations** that make it easier to escape predators. Exploring through movement can help young learners understand these adaptations and make connections to how animals interact with their environment.

Instructions

1. Start by standing up legs shoulder width apart, arms relaxed. For each animal, introduce them by asking children to describe their appearance. You can also utilize technology to bring up photos and videos to help visual animals and their adaptations. Ask what features are unique for that animal. Follow the instructions for each of the animals below.
2. **Giraffe:** To get their food, giraffes need to stretch their long necks and legs to reach the tops of trees. Have children stretch legs, arms, and neck to make themselves tall and stick out their tongue to reach the leaves and make chomping sounds. To reach watering holes, have the children stand with their feet hip width apart. Then bend over at the waist and place their arms wider than hip width apart. Children will then place their head down as to look at the floor and make slurping noises like they are drinking water.
3. **Flamingo:** Flamingos have long legs to help them wade through shallow water. Have children stand up and then lift one leg to practice balancing. While still balancing, have children stretch out opposite arm horizontal with the ground and point fingers down to make a beak. Bend over at the waist while balancing dropping arm and hand down to the floor. Flamingos will dip their heads and beak upside down to get shrimp from the water. Have children making eating sounds.
4. **Sea Lion:** Have children move down to their mat or towel lying flat on their stomachs. Lift their upper body using arms with legs still straight back. Discuss the way a sea lion moves by ‘walking’ on their front flippers. Have children move forward slightly with just their arms and legs dragging behind. Sea lions are flexible and can stretch back to their hind flippers. Have children slowly stretch their feet towards their head. Then make a sound like a sea lion (barking like a dog).
5. **Land Turtle:** Turtles who live on land have four legs and a tall dome-shaped shell. Have children get on all fours moving forward slowly due to the burden of a heavy shell. When they see a predator, have them practice tucking their legs and arms under their body to imitate going into their shell. Have children stretch out their head to look for predators and hide again when you say boo.

6. **Sea Anemone:** Have the children sit with their legs crossed. Sea anemones are sessile animals meaning they can't move from place to place, so they must use tentacles to capture their prey. Have children stretch their arms up above their heads and sway their arms and fingers to represent tentacles capturing food. When they sense a predator, they can tuck their tentacles into their body to hide. Practice capturing food and hiding tentacles a few times.
7. **Oyster:** Oysters are another type of sessile animal meaning they cannot move. They filter water into their body to remove small particles such as plankton to get their food. They have two shells that open and close to help them filter or protect themselves. Have children sit with their legs folded directly under them representing one side of their shell and make their upper body/arms into the half of the shell. Practice opening and closing with the high and low tides by bending at the waist to bring their upper body to meet their lower body. Repeat 2 or 3 times and use sound effects to represent filtering.
8. **Sloth:** Sloths move very slowly and spend most of their time in trees hiding from predators. They have muscles in their arms and legs to hang from trees. Moving very slowly to represent their speed, have children move onto their back stretching their legs and arms directly above their body. Curl their arms to grasp the branch hanging above them and cross their legs over each other. Explain that sloths must come out of the trees once a week and have them slowly move back into a sitting position.
9. Have children return to a seated position with legs crossed. If they would like to continue stretching and moving, ask children to select their favorite animal and discuss the different movements that animal would do to survive.

Vocabulary

Physical adaptation: special body parts that helps the animal survive such as fur, webbed feet, or a sharp beak

Behavioral adaptation: something an animal does (how it acts) to survive such as migrating or working in groups

Habitat: where an animal and plant lives

Extension

Encourage children to brainstorm other animals they want to research and identify physical and behavioral adaptations that help them move, find food, and protect themselves from predators. Search for photos and videos to help explore these adaptations and have children make up their own movements. Challenge them to be the lead teacher to model the animal movements while explaining the adaptations.