



Meerkat Survival

Audience

Activity designed for 8 years old and up. You need at least two people to play.

Goal

Students will appreciate the important role that meerkats play within their ecosystem as well as gain a better understanding of the predator/prey relationship.

Objective

- To learn predator/prey relationship.
- To understand the important role a meerkat serves.

Conservation Message

Meerkats are an important part of the ecosystem and can also help shape habitats. They create burrows that act as underground tunnel systems. Once the meerkats move on, they are used as homes for small rodents and reptiles. Meerkats are also important prey species for predators in deserts and savannas of Africa.

Background Information

Meerkats are native to desert habitats in Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa. These animals live in large communities and abide by the idea that there is safety in numbers. They will often assign a community member, or sometimes multiples members, as a lookout, called the sentinel. The sentinel is looking out for predators such as jackals and eagles. Occasionally meerkats will have a run in with venomous snakes such as the Cape Cobra. When the sentinel sees a potential danger, they will let out a sharp very high-pitched call to warn others to take cover and hide. While there are a few guarding the community, other meerkats will forage for foods and are good hunters that work together to catch rodents, insects and small reptiles.

Materials Needed

- 10 cups
- Small light-weight ball such as ping pong ball
- Pen/pencil/marker
- Counters (buttons, pennies, beans, etc.)

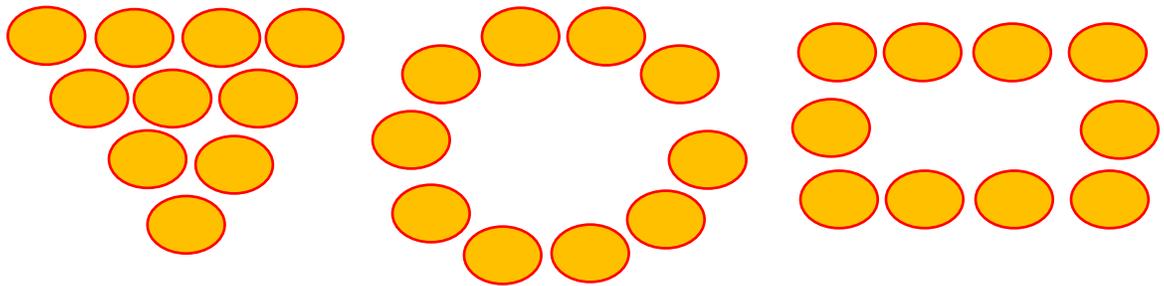
- Sticky Notes or Small Pieces of Paper with tape on back
- Scenario Cards

Length of Activity

40 minutes

Procedure

- Read the background information and gather the necessary materials.
- Number sticky notes from 1-10.
- Place a numbered sticky note on each cup.
- Set up the cups on one end of a table in any shape you can want such as:



- You can set up the cups in different number sequences, they do not have to be in numerical order.
- Each player is a meerkat. Each meerkat will have 3 lives; each player will start with 3 counters for represent their lives.
- The goal is to try to survive for as long as possible! For each number, there is a corresponding event that takes place. Some scenarios will make you lose a life (lose a counter), some make you gain a life (add a counter), and some have no effect (don't gain or lose).
- Each player goes to the opposite side of the table and will gently toss the ping pong ball towards the cups. Whichever cup the ball lands in, you read the that numbered scenario card. Read the card out loud.
- Follow the instructions on the card. If it says lose a life, you lose one counter. If the card says gain a life, you add a counter. If the card says no life lost, you don't lose or gain any counters.
- Each player takes their turn throwing the ball until someone loses all their lives or you make it through all 10 scenarios. Then you can switch the cups around to make a new shape and start a new round!

Scenario Cards

<p><u>Scenario Card 1</u> You saw a large bird in the sky! Run away and hide. No one is caught today</p>	<p><u>Scenario Card 6</u> You caught a fat insect and won't be starving tonight! Gain a life!</p>
<p><u>Scenario Card 2</u> You fell prey to a jackal that pounced on you! Lose a life.</p>	<p><u>Scenario Card 7</u> You're burrowed deep, you won't bake in the sun today. No life lost.</p>
<p><u>Scenario Card 3</u> A Martial Eagle swooped down to grab you, but you escaped.</p>	<p><u>Scenario Card 8</u> Insects everywhere, you will eat for days, gain a life!</p>
<p><u>Scenario Card 4</u> You ran into the venomous Cape Cobra! Lose a life.</p>	<p><u>Scenario Card 9</u> You went too long without water, now you're dehydrated. Lose a life.</p>
<p><u>Scenario Card 5</u> You caught the eye of a Tawny Eagle. Lose a Life.</p>	<p><u>Scenario 10</u> You found some fruit; you will live to eat another day! No life lost.</p>