



MINNESOTA ZOO™  
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# Animal Classification Stair Activity Onsite Activity

## MN Graduation Standards supported:

Grades 6-8  
Strand IV.B.5. The student will use the characteristics of an organism to identify the kingdom to which it belongs.

## Vocabulary:

Taxonomy  
Classification System  
Domain  
Kingdom  
Phylum  
Class  
Order  
Family  
Genus  
Species  
Binomial  
Nomenclature

## Introduction:

Use of taxonomy in practical settings is an important concept to master. This lesson is designed to be used at a visit to the zoo. During the visit to the zoo, students will practice identifying animals using their knowledge and understanding of taxonomy, phylum characteristics, and binomial nomenclature.

## Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, students will:

1. Be able to classify animals in to the appropriate phyla and/or class using visual traits.
2. Correctly write the genus and species names for animals found at the zoo.

## Procedure:

1. Ensure that each student has an Animal Classification worksheet completed and an Animal Staircase worksheet to fill out. Students will need these two sheets and a writing utensil at the zoo.
2. Discuss with students that some animals are found exclusively in certain environments. An example would be animals from the phyla Cnidaria are typically water animals and therefore would be located in an area such as the Discovery Cove or Coral Reef exhibits.
3. Review the correct way to use binomial nomenclature and the correct way to write the genus and species names. (*Genus* is capitalized and *species* is not.)

## Links:

### Basic Phyla Information

<http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/help/taxaform.html>

### Diversity Web Site

<http://members.shaw.ca/rjbiebri/ch4/MyWeb4/DiversityOfLife/DiversityOfLife.htm>

### Information on Animal Classification-

<http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/index.html>

## Procedure Continued:

4. Divide students into groups of ten students. They will be escorted by a chaperone. Depending on the modification used in the preactivity, different students may be looking for different phyla and/or classes of animals. See the pre-activity for suggested modifications.
5. As students tour the zoo, they will look for animals to match the phyla/class column designations on their grid. They will fill in the spaces on their Animal Staircase Grid when they find an animal that fits into that category. Students will identify animals using the information from the Animal Classification Grid they completed in the pre-activity or by reading exhibit information.
6. When they find an animal that fits into one of the categories, they will locate the sign at the exhibit site and record the genus and species names in addition to the common name of the animal. They will also write down the trail they found the animal on. As they go through the exhibits, they will find that some phyla and/or classes will be found on many trails at the zoo while others are found only on one trail.
7. The students will have completed this activity when they have filled out their Animal Staircase Grid completely with the correctly identified and grouped animals.
8. Teachers can assess completion of this activity by reviewing the Stair Activity Worksheet for the following items:
  - A. Use the common names of the animals to ensure they are grouped into the correct phyla and/or class.
  - B. Assess if students can correctly the genus and species using binomial nomenclature. (*Genus* is capitalized and *species* is not)

