

# Planning for Learning through Animals

by Rachel Sparks Linfield and Christine Warwick. Illustrated by Cathy Hughes

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# Making plans

## Child-friendly planning

The purpose of planning is to make sure that all children enjoy a broad and balanced experience of learning. Planning should be flexible, useful and child-friendly. It should reflect opportunities available both indoors and outside. Plans form part of a planning cycle in which practitioners make observations, assess and plan.

Children benefit from reflective planning that takes into account the children's current interests and abilities and also allows them to take the next steps in their learning. Plans should make provision for activity that promotes learning and a desire to imagine, observe, communicate, experiment, investigate and create.

Plans should include a variety of types of activity. Some will be adult-initiated or adult-led, that focus on key skills or concepts. These should be balanced with opportunities for child-initiated activity where the children take a key role in the planning. In addition there is a need to plan for the on-going continuous provision areas such as construction, sand and water, malleable materials, small world, listening area, role-play and mark-making. Thought also needs to be given to the enhanced provision whereby an extra resource or change may enable further exploration, development and learning.

The outdoor environment provides valuable opportunities for children's learning. It is vital that plans value the use of outdoor space.

## The UK Frameworks

Within the UK a number of frameworks exist to outline the provision that children should be entitled to receive. Whilst a variety of terms and labels are used to describe the Areas of Learning there are key principles which are common to each document. For example they advocate that practitioners' planning should be personal based on observations and knowledge of the specific children within a setting. They acknowledge that young children learn best when there is scope for child-initiated activity. In addition it is accepted that young children's learning is holistic. Although within the documents Areas of Learning are presented separately to ensure that key areas are not over-looked, within settings, children's learning will combine areas. Thus the Areas of Learning are perhaps of most use for planning, assessment and recording.



## Focused area plans

The plans you make for each day will outline areas of continuous provision and focused, adult-led activities. Plans for focused-area activities need to include aspects such as:

- resources needed;
- the way in which you might introduce activities;
- individual needs;
- the organisation of adult help;
- size of the group;
- timing;
- safety;
- key vocabulary.

Identify the learning and the Early Learning Goals that each activity is intended to promote. Make a note of any assessments or observations that you are likely to carry out. After carrying out the activities, make notes on your plans to say what was particularly successful, or any changes you would make another time.

## A final note

Planning should be seen as flexible. Not all groups meet every day, and not all children attend every day. Any part of the plan can be used independently, stretched over a longer period or condensed to meet the needs of any group. You will almost certainly adapt the activities as children respond to them in different ways and bring their own ideas, interests and enthusiasms. The important thing is to ensure that the children are provided with a varied and enjoyable curriculum that meets their individual developing needs.

## Using the book

Read the section which outlines links to the Early Learning Goals (pages 4-6) and explains the rationale for focusing on 'Animals'.

# Using the ‘Early Learning Goals’

The principles that are common to each of the United Kingdom curriculum frameworks for the early years are described on page 2. It is vital that, when planning for children within a setting, practitioners are familiar with the relevant framework’s content and organisation for areas of learning. Regardless however, of whether a child attends a setting in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales they have a right to provision for all areas of learning. The children should experience activities which encourage them to develop their communication and language; personal, social, emotional, physical, mathematical and creative skills. They should have opportunities within literacy and be encouraged to understand and explore their world.

Within the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012), Communication and Language; Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development are described as Prime Areas of Learning that are ‘particularly crucial for igniting children’s curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive’ (page 4, DfE 2012). The Specific Areas of Learning are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

For each Area of Learning the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) describe what children are expected to be able to do by the time they enter Year 1. These goals, detailed on pages 4 to 6, have been used throughout this book to show how activities relating to ‘Animals’ could link to these expectations. For example, for Personal, Social and Emotional Development one aim relates to the development of children’s ‘self-confidence and self-awareness’. Activities suggested which provide the opportunity for children to do this have the reference PSE1. This will enable you to see which parts of the Early Learning Goals are covered for a given theme and to plan for areas to be revisited and developed.

In addition, an activity may be carried out to develop a range of different Early Learning Goals. For example, when the children make lift-the-flap animal books they will

develop their writing skills for Literacy. In addition, when they write with a pencil, illustrate their books and open the flaps, they will use their fine motor skills which are part of Physical Development. Thus, whilst adult-focused activities may have clearly defined goals at the planning stage, it must be remembered that as children take on ideas and initiate their own learning and activities, goals may change.

## The Prime Areas of Learning

### Communication and Language

**Listening and attention:** children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity. (CL1)

**Understanding:** children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events. (CL2)

**Speaking:** children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners’ needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events. (CL3)

‘Animals’ provides many opportunities for children to enjoy listening, understanding and speaking. There are a wide range of books featuring animals and these can be used to stimulate interest in the chosen themes, encouraging children to listen and to talk. When discussing how to care for animals, children will have the opportunity to ask questions. Playing with farm animal family cards, and making pom-pom bees, will allow the children to follow instructions. Enjoying role-play as a vet or pet owner, will encourage children to express themselves and to show awareness of listeners’ needs.

## Physical Development

**Moving and handling:** children show good control and co-ordination in large and small movements. They move confidently in a range of ways, safely negotiating space. They handle equipment and tools effectively, including pencils for writing. (PD1)



## Example chart to aid planning in the EYFS

Week beginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>FOCUSED ACTIVITIES</b>					
Focus Activity 1:					
Focus Activity 2:					
Stories and rhymes					
<b>CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Indoor)</b>					
Collage					
Construction (large)					
Construction (small)					
ICT					
Imaginative play					
Listening					
Malleable materials					
Mark making					
Painting					
Role play					
Sand (damp)					
Sand (dry)					
Water					
<b>CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Outdoor)</b>					
Construction					
Creative play					
Exploratory play					
Gross motor					
<b>ENHANCED PROVISION (Indoor)</b>					
<b>ENHANCED PROVISION (Outdoor)</b>					



# Theme 1: Name the animal

## Communication and Language

- Show children a variety of pictures of animals. Collaboratively sort the pictures into ones which children might have as pets and ones that are found in the wild. In what other ways could the animals be sorted? (CL2)
- Read a book about animals such as *Dinnertime* by Jan Pienkowski. Ask children to say the names of the animals in the book. Where do children think that the animals might live? How do children think they would feel if they were an animal meeting a human for the first time? Discuss the importance of being quiet and gentle near animals. (CL1)

## Physical Development

- Play a game in which children are walking stealthily through a jungle. Help the children to imagine they are looking through binoculars to find hiding animals. Whenever the 'lion' roars the children have to freeze. (PD1)
- Encourage children to pretend to move as if they are a chosen animal. (PD1)
- Enjoy making a jungle of animals with playdough and animal-shaped cutters. (PD1)

## Personal, Social and Emotional Development

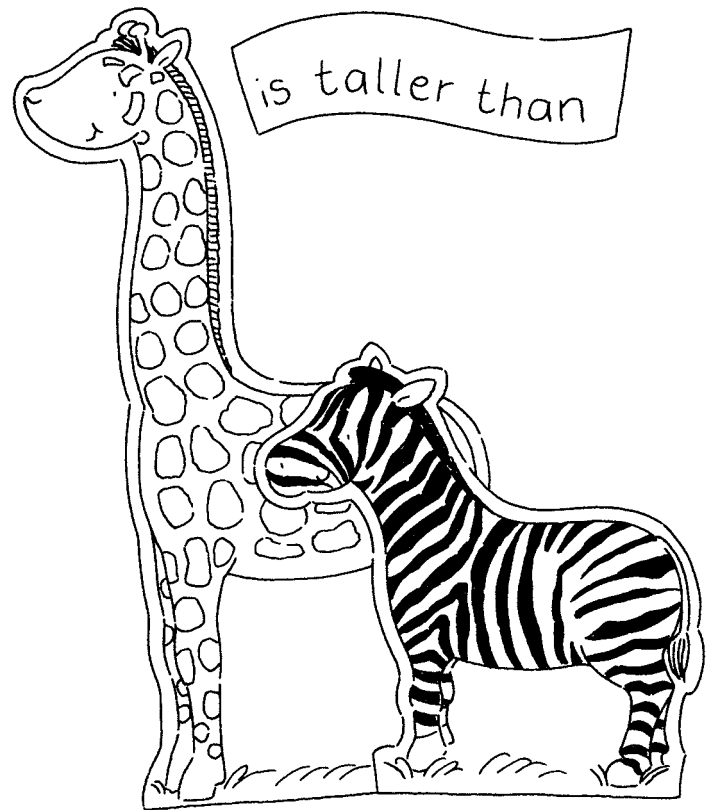
- Enjoy using the jungle role-play area (see 'Display'). (PSE3)
- Talk about the sounds that animals make. Invite children to take it in turn to play 'I spy an animal that sounds like this.' (PSE3)

## Literacy

- Start an animal alphabet that can be added to as themes are introduced. On large sheets of card write each letter of the alphabet in lower case. Invite children to suggest animals that begin with each letter and to draw a picture and write the word of their choice. (L2)
- Collect words to name animals. How many can be read before the sand runs through a timer? (L1)
- Outside, hide the animal words. Challenge the children to find the words. (L1)
- Use *Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell as the stimulus for making lift-the-flap concertina books (see activity opposite). (L2)

## Mathematics

- Use pictures and mathematical language to make sentences to describe animals (see activity opposite). (M2)
- Sort pictures or toy animals into hoops according to features such as number of legs, has a beak and so on.



Ask children to count how many animals there are in each hoop. (M1)

## Understanding the World

- Introduce the book *Rumble in the Jungle* by Giles Andreae. Encourage children to identify the animals and to describe where they are hiding. Use the pictures to learn about the names of animal body parts. (UW2)
- Provide each child with a picture of an animal (animal snap cards are ideal). Encourage children to describe their animals and to notice similarities and differences between animals. (UW2)

## Expressive Arts and Design

- Enjoy singing songs that mention animals. Encourage children to be the animals and, also, to add percussion/sound effects. (EAD1)
- Look at pictures that show animal patterns such as the stripes of a zebra or the spots of a leopard. Provide each child with a large pre-drawn picture of a tiger, zebra, snake, leopard, cheetah, jaguar or giraffe. Use sponges, rollers and ready-mixed paint to produce the animal's pattern. (EAD1)

## Activity: Making 'Dear Zoo' flapbooks

**Learning opportunity:** Responding to a story, reading, writing and making books.

**Early Learning Goal:** Literacy. Reading. Writing.

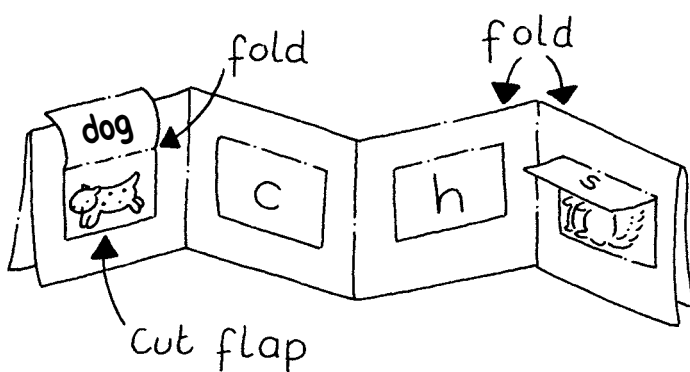
**Resources:** *Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell; pencils; crayons; for each child a flap book made from A3 sized stiff paper (see diagram).

**Key vocabulary:** Names of animals, flap book, page, cover, author.

**Organisation:** Whole group introduction, small group practical activity.

**What to do:** Show the group *Dear Zoo* by Rod Campbell. Point out where the author's name is and explain that he wrote the book. As you read, encourage the children to join in with the repeated phrases and predict what might be under each flap. Show the group the prepared flap books. Explain that they are each going to make their own 'Dear Zoo' book. Encourage them to think of the animals that they might like to put under each flap and of the one that they would keep.

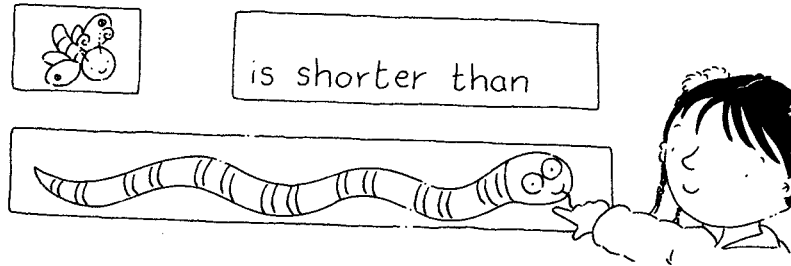
Working with children in small groups, help them to draw the pictures of the animals, write their names and to write the initial letter of each one on the flaps. Decorate the covers and help children to write their own names on them. When all the books have been completed, encourage children to 'read' theirs to the group and to enjoy guessing which animal might be under a friend's flap.



## Activity: Making animal sentences

**Learning opportunity:** Using language to describe size.

**Early Learning Goal:** Mathematics. Shape, space and measures.



**Resources:** Pictures of an elephant, a giraffe, a zebra, a snake, an ant, a worm and a butterfly. (The pictures must show the relative sizes of the animals to allow children to compare them.) Strips of card showing the following phrases: 'is smaller than', 'is greater than', 'is taller than', 'is shorter than', 'is heavier than', 'is lighter than'. Sticky Velcro or magnetic tape.

**Key vocabulary:** Names of animals, smaller, greater, taller, shorter, heavier, lighter.

**Organisation:** Small group.

**What to do:** Show the group the pictures of the animals. Describe one of the animals using phrases from the key vocabulary list, for example: 'This animal is very tall. It is taller than ....' Ask children to point to the animal that they think you are describing. Depending upon how confident the children are in using the language invite one to describe an animal for the group to pick out. Introduce the phrase card 'is taller than'. Place the picture of the giraffe at the start of the phrase and ask for suggestions of which animals could finish it. On future occasions encourage children to make their own sentences.

## Display

Create a jungle area to use for role-play. Cover a large board at floor level with a variety of green backing papers. Cut out and stick on 3-d leaves, grasses and trees. Place cushions covered with animal prints or green fabric on the floor along with a safe, real plant in a plastic pot and a green box with the animal books used during the week. Display the printed animals with name labels among the leaves and encourage children to visit their jungle.