



DESCRIPTION

This lesson will allow students examine operant conditioning when training animals. Operant conditioning is a type of learning where the probability of a behavior recurring is increased or decreased by the actions that follow such as positive or negative reinforcement and punishment. Students will be able to experience training first hand by being the animal and the animal trainer.

OBJECTIVES:

Learners will-
demonstrate ability to use positive reinforcement.

SETTING THE STAGE:

Ask students why anyone would want to train an animal.

Why would people want to train their pets and what kind of behaviors would people want to train?

What could a person do to train an animal a certain behavior?

Can students name any famous animals that have been trained to do a behavior or behaviors like Lassie or Willie from Free Willie?

Is it possible to train a person?

CUB-LEVEL ACTIVITY:

Separate the class into groups.

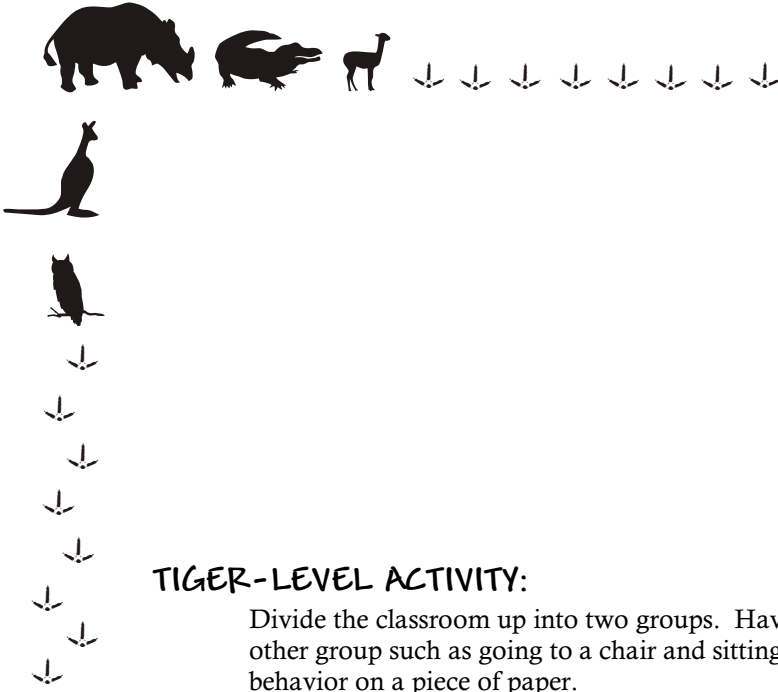
Have each group pick trainers and animals. Allow them to come up with a skit that would have the student trainers train the student animals a simple behavior.

Make sure the students are demonstrating positive reinforcement rather than punishment. Positive reinforcement is giving an animal something they want for doing a behavior that was asked for. A great reinforcement is food.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY





TIGER-LEVEL ACTIVITY:

Divide the classroom up into two groups. Have each group pick a behavior to train to the other group such as going to a chair and sitting down or picking up a book. Write the chosen behavior on a piece of paper.

Pick one person from each group. Have one person be the trainer and the other the animal. Use a primary reinforcer such as food rather than words to have the trainer train the animal the decided behavior. For example, getting a student to sit in a chair, feed the animal some food with every step that brings them closer to achieving the behavior.

Make sure that only positive reinforcement is used and that there is no punishment involved at all.

Baby steps will lead to the desired behavior. When the final goal is accomplished, a generous bonus should be offered.

CLOSURE:

Encourage students to become better trainers by using positive reinforcement. Have them think about when the animal should be reinforced and how they would reinforce an animal.

MATERIALS:

CUB: Drawing materials such as papers, crayons, pencils, etc...

TIGER: Paper and writing utensils.

