

Fat, Flippers and Faces



Objective

Students will be able to name four manatee adaptations.

Materials

- potatoes
- toothpicks
- construction paper patterns of tail and flippers (on page 2)
- glue or tape
- markers

Action

1. Lead the students in a discussion about adaptations. Ask them to define the word *adaptation*. An adaptation is a body part, behavior, or an ability the animal has to survive in its environment. Ask the students if they can name adaptations they have. We have adaptations like thumbs to grasp things, feet to stand on, and legs to run with. We have three different-shaped teeth in our mouths to help us bite and chew food.
2. Ask the students if they think a manatee has adaptations. Can they name some of the manatee's adaptations? Manatees have large, flat tails that help them swim, they have flippers for steering, whiskers for finding things in murky water, and a dark gray or brown color for camouflage.
3. Hand out a construction paper copy of the manatee flippers and tail to each student, along with a toothpick. Have the students cut out the flippers and tails and break the toothpicks in half. Demonstrate how to glue or tape the toothpick onto one side of each flipper and on the tail.
4. Demonstrate how to stick the flippers and tail into the potato. Lead the students in a discussion about how manatees use these adaptations to survive. Manatees use their tails to propel themselves through the water. They use their front flippers to steer and to guide food into their mouths.
5. Have the students draw the eyes, nostrils, mouth, and whiskers on the manatee while discussing each of these adaptations. Discuss the well-developed eyes which help the manatee detect objects underwater, the nostrils on top of the snout for easy breathing at the surface, of the water, the mouth with its flexible lips to grasp aquatic plants, and whiskers to help them locate food in murky water.

Deeper Depths

Give students another set of supplies and have them create a dolphin. Compare and contrast a manatee's and dolphin's adaptations.

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