Ethogram Worksheet

What is an ethogram?

An ethogram is a tool used by scientists to observe and record the behaviors of animals. They can be animals in the care of humans and in the wild. This tool can be used to learn more about animals and to track animal health.

PART 1: Choosing an animal and learning more about it!

1. Choose an animal to observe (please note, you will be tracking the behaviors of the same individual for the whole ethogram). You can choose to collect data on your dog, cat, or other pet. Or you can watch animals using one of the live webcams listed below. Note: you may need to ask a parent to help you get to one of the online webcams.
    a. Oregon Coast Aquarium Sea Otter Cam - https://aquarium.org/otter-cam/
        Sea bird (24 hours) and shark cams (8 AM – 8 PM) are also available here.
    b. Monterey Bay Aquarium Cams –
        https://montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams
        We recommend:
        i.   Sea Otter Cam (7 AM – 7 PM)
        ii. Penguin Cam (7 AM – 5 PM)
    c. Full list of webcams - https://www.earthcam.com/events/animalcams/ (includes cams from zoos all over the world!)
2. Do you know the animal you chose to watch well? If you do not know a lot about the animal you chose to watch (focal animal), spend about one minute watching your animal to learn more about your animal's unique markings (especially if you are watching a zoo animal that is sharing a tank or space with other similar animals and your animal may move in and out of your view).
3. Spend approximately five minutes watching, researching, and thinking of behaviors for this type of animal, then list and describe the potential behaviors in the "Behavior List" below. For example, common otter behaviors are feeding, grooming, swimming, diving, playing, etc.)
4. Once you have your list of behaviors, be sure you also write your list of possible animal behaviors in the data table on page 2.
5. Now it's time to collect data! Grab a timer/stopwatch. Set and start your timer for 10 minutes. At 30 seconds, note your focal animal's behavior and check that behavior box on your data table. Mark the behavior of your animal every 30 second for 10 minutes in the data table. Note: You should have 20 check marks (observations) when you are finished with your 10 minutes of data collection.
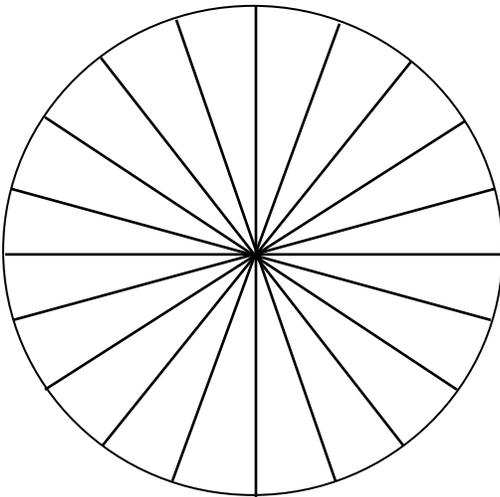
Behavior List

List the different animal behaviors you noticed your animal doing while you were watching it for five minutes. Are there other common behaviors you expect to see your animal do? Write the behaviors and a short description of each behavior in the space below. Include at least 6 different behaviors.

Part 1 continued: Watching your animal and writing down your data!

This is where you will write down the behaviors you expect to see during the 10 minutes you watch your animal. Once you start your timer, at 30 seconds (0:30), take note of your animal's behavior and check the behavior box.

For Example: If you are watching an otter and you notice at 30 seconds it is "diving", check (or marK an X) in the box that lines up with 0:30 and the behavior you wrote in at the top of the table. Then, at 1:00 you notice your otter is swimming, be sure to check the box that lines up with 1:00 and "swimming." Then, at 1:30, you notice your otter is diving again, be sure to check the box that lines up with 1:30 and "diving." See example table below.

Time (min:sec)	EXAMPLE - Otter Behaviors							
	Feeding	Grooming	Swimming (at water surface)	Diving (below water surface)	Playing			
0:30				X				
1:00			X					
1:30				X				

Your Data Table:

Time (min:sec)	Behaviors							
0:30								
1:00								
1:30								
2:00								
2:30								
3:00								
3:30								
4:00								
4:30								
5:00								
5:30								
6:00								
6:30								
7:00								
7:30								
8:00								
8:30								
9:00								
9:30								
10:00								

PART 2: What happened? Let's make a chart so we can see it!

To make a summary of your data so you can easily see what behavior your animal did the most, we are going to use a pie chart.

1. Grab some markers, colored pencils, or crayons.
2. Choose a different color for each behavior.
3. Grab the first color crayon/maker/colored pencil you chose for your first behavior. Count the number of check marks (or X's) in your data table for your first behavior, and color in that many slices of the pie chart (all next to each other).
4. Do this for all of your behaviors, using different colors for each behavior.
5. Label each differently colored section of the pie chart with the behavior it represents.
6. What can you tell from looking at this pie chart?

PART 3: What do your results tell you about your animal? What did you learn?

- What behavior did your animal do the most (which pie chunk is the largest?)

- What was the hardest part of watching and writing down data on your animal?

- Would you do anything differently next time?

- After completing this activity, what questions do you now have about your animal and its habitat?