

# BEST PRACTICE COLLECTION

for the Learning Humanity from Animals project



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## ABOUT THE LEHUA PROJECT

We live now in an ever-changing environment. Our personal lives are affected by various global factors which are themselves co- and interdependent: climate change, migration, terrorism, wars - and all social factors coming from these phenomenon: fear, xenophobia, closed society.

All these issues can be targeted at rational levels to decrease fears (eg. by providing information), however fear is much more deeply rooted in our biological being. We are afraid for our lives, culture, family, and way of living and all the above factors have a clear impact on these on an everyday level.

**Being able to face fears, to connect to emotions, and to live a positive life** is a basis for being able to feel empathy, acceptance towards others. **Emotional intelligence is the competence to understand our feelings and feelings of others**, and based on this to be able to act upon them and act based on them.

*Therefore, the most important area we have to work on is to help young people to understand themselves, their emotions, senses, feelings better in order to be able to control them better.*

This can come from several levels which are included in our project: meeting others, meeting animals - and meeting themselves through these encounters.

Our main focus is the **Animal-Human Interaction**, and *our aim is to develop a training course and belonging materials about how connecting to animals and nature can help humans to develop prosocial intra- and interpersonal skills* such as empathy, self-reflexion, resilience or coping.

During the project we developed and tested materials with and for youth workers, which they can use within their youth development work to reach the previously mentioned development goals with youth.

We believe that animal-human interactions have a deep transformative potential and can contribute to the development of soft competencies which are profound elements of emotional intelligence. Alternative knowledge systems (encounter with living animals as well as literature, games and tales on animals) have a crucial effect on self-empowerment and develop a sense of agency.



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## THE MEMBERS OF THE CONSORTIUM

Rogers Foundation for Person-Centred Education -  
Hungary (Coordinating organization)

<http://www.rogersalapitvany.hu/en/>



Budapest Zoo and Botanical Garden - Hungary

<http://www.zoobudapest.com/>



„Milvus Group” Bird and Nature Protection  
Association - Romania

<http://milvus.ro/en/>



TANDEM n.o. - Slovakia

<https://www.tandemno.sk/en>



In the next chapter you can learn more about each of the partners and what they bring to the project, or you can also visit their websites listed above for a more in depth introduction.





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## Rogers Foundation for Person-Centred Education

Based on Carl R. Rogers' thoughts we believe that a person can understand and fulfil him or herself through living, personal experiences and in accepting relationships.

Our mission is to ensure this accepting relationship to people, and to have people understand and become conscious about its importance. Also we would like to understand and prevent all barriers against building up these relationships. For this purpose, we organize and run educational, experiential activities, as well as organize researches, projects and services.

As a permanent educational institution we still maintain the successor of the Rogers Secondary School, the Rogers Academy, where young people looking for an alternative for traditional education can find their place. As we experience people find us either for our value system, or for dealing with learning and behavioural problems. As a registered Talent Point, we also regularly organize talent development programs.

Besides our permanent activities in the last ten years we have implemented more than 50 educational projects in different areas but with common approach: drama pedagogy, arts therapy, free play, game-based learning, emotional intelligence, systems thinking, leisure time pedagogy, talent development, e-learning, sustainability education, human rights and equal opportunities, person-centred organizational development.

Project on Rogers Foundation for Person-Centred Education's website: [LEHUA](#)

### Office:

H-1126 Budapest, Beethoven utca 6.

Magyarország

Tel: +36 30 243 2590

E-mail: [info@rogersalapitvany.hu](mailto:info@rogersalapitvany.hu)

Web: [Rogers Személyközpontú Oktatásért Alapítvány](#)

Facebook: [Rogers Személyközpontú Oktatásért Alapítvány](#)



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## “Milvus Group” Bird and Nature Protection Association

Milvus Group association is a non-profit, non-governmental organization acting in the fields of nature conservation, research, education and advisory, in order to make Romania a better place for wildlife and people.

A few very enthusiastic young bird-watchers founded the Milvus in autumn 1991. Since the end of 2001 the Association for Bird and Nature Protection “Milvus Group” became an independent registered NGO.

Education is one of the most precious activities among the many that Milvus has. Our main goal is to form a responsive perception of nature and environmental problems among citizens, especially in the young generations.

Since we have a well-functioning Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in a village near Tîrgu Mureş where we have some bird cages built especially for educational use. Here are those birds that cannot be rehabilitate because of their permanent injuries and they cannot be released. We think this is a great opportunity to develop an emotional connection between human and animal, human and nature.

Project on Milvus Group’s website: [LEHUA](#)

### Office:

str. Crinului 22 540343/str. Márton Áron nr. 9B 540058,  
Tîrgu Mureş, Romania

Tel: +40 265 264726, E-mail: [office@milvus.ro](mailto:office@milvus.ro)

Web: [www.milvus.ro](http://www.milvus.ro) / [www.facebook.com/MilvusGroup](https://www.facebook.com/MilvusGroup)

Postal address: O.P.1 C.P.40 540600 Tîrgu Mureş, Romania



# Best Practice Collection

ZOO



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## TANDEM, n.o.

TANDEM, n.o. founded in 2009 is a training and development organization, which through its work with individuals, communities and organizations aims to strengthen their self-esteem and sense of responsibility.

From the components, which are essential for the world's harmonious functioning, as its own main point of interest TANDEM highlights human identity. This is approached through work done in three main areas of human identity by programs and services of developing, supporting and empowering these individuals. Our three target groups are individuals, communities and organisations. We put a special emphasis on working with the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia, thus providing essential service in the field of self-knowledge, career orientation and organisational development in their mother tongue.

The main objectives of the organisation can be put into three very distinctive groups:

The first area is personality development. Over the past years we have developed a very complex model of personality development, in which we offer different services, like self-knowledge trainings. This can happen individually, or in organized groups.

The second area is organization and community development. We offer organization development trainings and counselling for other non-profit organisations. A good example of such activities is our long cooperation with the organisation of the Diákhálózat (Student network), aiming at developing in the following topics: leadership coaching, strategic planning, project management, future planning and team building, just to name a few. In this area we also work on our own community development projects which consist of researches and community events.

The third area is career guidance and counselling. We offer individual counselling, group activities and future planning trainings for high school students, career planning seminar for university students. One of our innovative programmes in this area is a whole day festival-like career guidance program, called „Mesterségem CÍMERRE?”.

Project on Tandem, n.o.'s website: [LEHUA](#)

### Office:

Komárno, Dunajské nábrežie 12. - Danubius building

1st floor - door no.209

E-mail: [tandemno@tandemno.sk](mailto:tandemno@tandemno.sk)

Web: [www.tandemno.sk](http://www.tandemno.sk)

Facebook: [TANDEMno](#)

Postal address: Mesačná 521/10, 94501 Komárno, Slovakia



# Best Practice Collection

## ABOUT THIS BEST PRACTICE COLLECTION

This Best Practice Collection is a practical handbook **containing 40 varied and versatile activities** that cover any comprehensive range of learning themes, which are especially relevant **for youth workers and training professional**. Through these exercises our aim is to enhance prosocial intra- and interpersonal skills such as empathy, self-reflexion, resilience or coping of young people, as these are the competences needed for the youth for empowered actions, to become “agents” in their own life.

By helping them learning about themselves through encounters with themselves, each other - and animals in their surroundings, young people can reach a more empowered existence.

Each activity can serve a range of training needs and agendas, as the exercises are applicable to a variety of learning themes, some of which can be explored in depth using the activity alone or in conjunction with suggested companion exercises. They can be implemented either in different times for different purposes or used singularly to accomplish a variety of related learning objectives. All of the exercises are intended for 13-29 year olds.

The nature of the activities ranges from dramatic simplicity to challenging complexity. Some activities are pure games while others are physical exercises as well as challenging practices. Some activities are designed to be practiced indoors, while others are ideal for outdoors or for a visit in the zoo.

All of these purposes are clearly stated in the description of the activities, but they can be used as one wishes. Others specifics are also provided for dealing with observers, group division, or structuring the debriefing session. There are activities for small groups of threes and large groups of 15 or more.

All activities require only a minimum of materials or preparation. Some activities require the leader of the game to lead and orchestrate, whereas others are self-running. The leader does not need any special skills to lead these activities successfully and confidently. These exercises are user-friendly and fun for the leader as well as the participants.

**Each activity description provides all the information necessary to conduct the exercise**, including directions and other additional and useful information regarding safety instructions for both humans and animals. **Each activity has been extensively tested** in vivo through repeated use **with a variety of groups** on which he recommendations are based.

If you will include live animals, which would provide a great experience for the participants, please [pay attention to the animal welfare \(water, food supplies, even relaxation time\)](#). It is not recommended to keep animals in hand for long time, to caress or to stroke the animal. And also, respect the participants’ feelings of strong disgust or even fears of some animals. Never force them to participate in any activity.



# Best Practice Collection

## Layout of the Activities

Each of the 40 activities follow the same layout of instructions. Where it wasn't necessary, some parts have been left out on purpose.

### Title of exercise

**Time required:** An approximate duration of the entire activity is provided

**Number of people:** Guidelines for how many people should participate are included in this section, with ideal group or subgroup sizes indicated when relevant.

**Equipment needed:** Any materials (e.g. balls, pencils) needed to set up the activity are listed. Information on where to purchase expensive materials needed for the exercise are provided.

### Aim of exercise

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### How to (description)

This section provides a longer, detailed description and vivid picture of what the participants are being challenged to do.

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**Variations:** Alternative ways of conducting the activity are explained along with any significant information.

**Pitfalls and experiences:** This section details actual problems and possible pitfalls to avoid while conducting the activity. This section contains specific reminders about the safety concerns and preventative measures necessary to ensure that no mishaps occur.

### Useful webpages

### Relevant literature and filmography

# **ICEBREAKERS & ENERGIZERS**

## ICEBREAKERS AND ENERGIZERS

An energizer or a icebreaker is an activity that can be used to warm up the team and promote group interaction. It is a good starter for any team meeting. These activities are great for team building, getting to know each other, getting people to think about a specific topic, or simply just to wake up a sleepy and tired group.

### **When should you use energizers?**

- Use energizers frequently during a workshop or meeting, whenever people look sleep or tired or to create a natural break between activities.
  - Use energizers to create a positive group atmosphere.
  - Use energizers to help people to relax, energize and motivate.

### **What are the benefits of using energizers?**

- Break down social barriers
- Help people to "think outside the box"
- Help people getting to know each other



# Best Practice Collection

## Freeze

**Time required:** at least 10 min.

**Number of people:** best for larger groups of 5+ people

**Equipment needed:** music

**Aim of the exercise:** icebreaking

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### How to (description):

Choose some of your players favourite tunes and turn up the volume. Ask them to dance until the music stops. When it does, they have to freeze in whatever position they find themselves in - even if they have one leg up. To make the game more challenging, ask the players to freeze in specific poses: animals, shapes, letters or even yoga postures.

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# Best Practice Collection

## Sparrow hawk

**Time required:** 10-15 minutes

**Number of people:** minimum 6, maximum 30, optimal 15-16

**Equipment needed:** beanbags or soft balls

**Aim of the exercise:** icebreaking, energizing

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### How to (description):

Choose a person to be the sparrow hawk. The rest of the group spreads out and stands still as trees. On the shout of 'go' the bird (beanbag or ball) is thrown at random from one tree to another. The sparrow hawk tries to catch it.

If the sparrow hawk catches the bird it replaces the tree from which the bird flew.

Try using more than one 'bird'.

---

Variations: One of the variations of the Sparrow hawk game is titled *Kitten*, which is described in more detail on the following page.

# Best Practice Collection

## Kitten

**Time required:** 10-15 minutes

**Number of people:** 5-6

**Equipment needed:** smaller area, bigger ball

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### How to (description):

The players stand in a circle, except for one player, the kitten. The players standing in the circle toss the ball to each other, the kitten tries to get it. If the kitten catches the ball, she/he exchanges her/his place with the player who threw the ball last.

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### Useful webpages:

<http://www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk/Environmental%20games%20and%20activities.pdf>

# Best Practice Collection

## Fishing game

**Time required:** 15-20

**Number of people:** 6-8

**Equipment needed:** medium room

**Aim of the exercise:** energizing

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### How to (description):

Two players are the fishermen; the rest are the fish. The two fishermen run tightly together in the field of scattered fish and try to catch them one by one. Those who are captured will also become fisherman, and now they are running in triplets after other fish. At one time they may even have 2-3 fish in their "net"!

The number of fishermen is always increasing, the fish situation is getting harder. The chain of fishermen must not break away from the playing field.

The cleverest (last) two fish will be the two fishermen at the beginning of the next gameplay.

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# Best Practice Collection

## Stormy sea

**Time required:** 15 minutes

**Number of people:** 5-6

**Equipment needed:** medium room, stones

**Aim of the exercise:** energizing

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### How to (description):

Each player is given a “fish name”. They sit down in any part of the area or the “sea” and mark their place - their shelter - with a little stone, piece of wood or with chalk.

The referee has no specific place. He/she goes to the sea and calls the “fish” one by one to follow him, miming the movements of swimming or movements of the referee.

Suddenly he/she shouts: “The sea is troubled!”

The fish change their locations as fast as possible by going to a different shelter. Whoever is captured by the referee before finding a shelter will be killed, and one of the shelters will be wiped off. For each turn one shelter is wiped off.

The last remaining fish is the winner of the game.

While finding a place it is not allowed to push the other players.

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# Best Practice Collection

## The sleepy tiger

**Time required:** 15-20 minutes

**Number of people:** around 6-10

**Equipment needed:** scarfs

**Aim of the exercise:** energizing

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### How to (description):

The players form a circle. Situated in the middle, one of the players is blindfolded, he/she is the tiger. The others form a circle around the tiger, and slowly start to walk and chant the rhyme:

*“The sleepy tiger fell asleep, we can play,  
but when he gets up, don’t dare to get in his way.  
Come on then, let’s dance now and rejoice,  
but beware of the evil creature’s hungry jaws!”*

The rhyme is finished, the players stop chanting and one of the players wakes up the tiger. He/she gets up and walks over to one of the players. He/she points at him/her and mimes the sound of an animal: eg. barks, coos, meow, crows, etc. The person repeats the sound in the same way, and the blindfolded tiger needs to guess who made the sound.

If the tiger succeeds, they switch roles. The tiger has three shots.

If she/he fails each time, he/she goes back "to sleep" and the whole process (the rhyme and the guessing) is repeated.

---

### Pitfalls and experiences:

The “tiger” and the other players need to know each other’s names.

# Best Practice Collection

## Whisper it further

**Time required:** minimum 5 minutes

**Number of people:** minimum 6 people

**Aim of the exercise:** icebreaking and teambuilding

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### How to (description):

Make up a story of 4-5 sentences about an animal species, and whisper it further, then the next player whispers it to the next person - this is the way how we transmit information.

Usually at the end something completely else is born instead of the first piece of information. This way we can observe how information is distorted, then we can talk about gossiping.

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# **TEAM BUILDING & STRATEGY GAMES**

## LONGER, TEAM BUILDING AND STRATEGY GAMES

Team building games are a good way to get your team to connect and work together better. In this part of the Best Practice Collection a few types of strategy games are provided as well. During these games the players' decision-making skills have a high significance in determining the outcome. Almost all strategy games require internal decision tree style thinking, and typically very high situational awareness.

### **When should you use team building exercises?**

Team building and strategy games facilitate collaborative and motivated group culture as these activities are seen as a move towards bringing individuals together. They also help in agile problem solving and decision making as many people contribute in the process. These games foster responsive and meaningful communication as players come to know personality, desires, strengths and weaknesses of their co-players.

### **What are the benefits of using team building exercises?**

- boosts player morale as they feel the co-players are interested in knowing and developing them, a valid reason for employee retention
  - helps creativity and out-of-the-box thinking
- learning and insights from these team-building games can be transferred to the actual environment resulting in better co-living with animals, nature and society

# Best Practice Collection

## Sensing the environment

**Time required:** 10-15 minutes

**Number of people:** it can be suitable for a whole class, or up to 25-30 children

**Equipment needed:** 2-2 bamboo sticks and objects of different shape

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### How to (description):

The refined sense of touch of seals, catfish or even rats can be demonstrated by games. During the game we can evoke the sense of touch of animals that live in an environment lacking light, or in muddy, murky water and we can try to make our perception of objects more refined in this way.

The players stand in pairs. One of them places an object in front of his/her blindfolded partner, which he or she tries to feel by holding 1-1 bamboo sticks (the person, who is helping, places the bamboo sticks on one part of the object, that is where he or she can start feeling it). The blindfolded person tries to identify the object by feeling it. If he or she does not succeed for the first time, the helping person can place the end of the stick on the part of the object, which he or she finds important in order to identify the object.

If the player does not manage to find out, you can use a simpler object, or by taking off the blindfold, he or she can look at the object.

Touching: texture, hardness, temperature. It plays a leading role in development and in social interactions, it can even override vision. Perception can be improved with practice at all ages.

---

**Variations:** This game can be extended by so-called “blindfold” games. Horse-drawn carriages are lead with a blind folded horse by a horseman with a rein.

**Pitfalls and experiences:** Children can easily turn over the objects, fragile objects should not be asked to touch.

### Useful webpages:

[www.waza.org](http://www.waza.org)

[www.eaza.net](http://www.eaza.net)

[www.izea.net](http://www.izea.net)



# Best Practice Collection

## Largescale archerfish ball

**Time required:** 20-25 minutes

**Number of people:** 2-10

**Equipment needed:** smaller area, 3-4 tennis or skin balls

**Aim of exercise:** teambuilding

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### How to (description):

Players are divided into two parties: bugs and largescale archerfish. The two groups line up 2 to 4 meters in front of each other. Bugs are on their feet.

The aim of the largescale archerfish is to strike the bugs (on which they stand) with a swirling ball. For each hit, a point is awarded to fish. Bugs are erected on their right or left feet, but not on their two feet at the same time.

Largescale archerfish and bugs change their role every 2-3 minutes. Which team finds the bug leg more times - it gets more points - it wins.

One of the fish should stand behind the bugs to give back the balls.

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# Best Practice Collection

## Hussarball

**Time required:** 40 minutes

**Number of people:** 8-10

**Equipment needed:** small area, rubber ball

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### How to (description):

The players are divided into pairs in a way that pairs should be physically roughly equal. Half of the players are horses and the other half are hussars. The hussars sit on the horses back (or hips) and all of them form a big circle, far away from each other.

For a given signal, the hussars toss a ball to each other while sitting on the back of the horses. Horses are walking or running around while the hussars are throwing the balls. If one of the hussars drops the ball, all of the hussars get off their horse's back, and try to escape.

In the meantime, one of the horses gets the ball and tries to hit one of the hussars. If he/she doesn't hit any of the hussars, then he and his hussar replace their roles (the horse becomes the hussar and vice versa). But if he/she hits a hussar with the ball, every hussar has to change their roles with the horses and the game continues.

Horses cannot prevent hussars from jumping down of their backs and running away. Hussars on the other hand cannot touch the ball once it has hit the ground.

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**Pitfalls and experiences:** This is a physically challenging game. Play it only if you are certain that everybody agrees and enjoys it.

# Best Practice Collection

## Bio-activity

**Time required:** 10-15 minutes, it can be increased

**Number of people:** it can be suitable for a whole class, or up to 25-30 children.

**Equipment needed:** flashcards showing concepts or names of species such as biodiversity, sustainability, ecological role, fangs, endurance, European lynx, freshwater crayfish, reindeer etc., depending on what subjects you would like to discuss with the children.

---

### How to (description):

Form groups of 4 or 5 children, each group having a volunteer, who starts the game. He or she picks a card and acts or mimes the expression/word on the card to the others. As soon as somebody knows the answer, he or she becomes the next person to act or mime after having chosen a new card.

Whichever group can act or mime the most expressions in a given time, wins the game.

---

**Variations:** We can classify the cards according to their level of difficulty, and can prepare really difficult cards for the very smart ones.

### Useful webpages:

[www.waza.org](http://www.waza.org)

[www.eaza.net](http://www.eaza.net)

[www.izea.net](http://www.izea.net)



# Best Practice Collection

## Movements of Animals

**Time required:** 15- 20 minutes

**Number of people:** it can be suitable for a whole class, or up to 25-30 children

**Equipment needed:** flashcards showing animals

---

### How to (description):

Prepare flashcards showing different animals. The players choose one card and try to imitate the movement of the animal shown on the card. Make sure you prepare cards with animals having different types of movements, including ones, whose rhythm or order of steps are not so easy to guess: for example, a walking giraffe, zebra, galloping hippo, walking tiger, running lion, kangaroo, sea lions, harbour seal. You can make cards with animals that can only be acted in a group, for example a snake, or millipedes etc.

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**Variations:** You can play a more difficult version if you prepare cards based on footprint. When they choose a card, first they have to find out what kind of steps they can see in what order, what species the movement belongs to, and then they have to imitate the movement based on what they can see on the card.

### Useful webpages:

[www.waza.org](http://www.waza.org)

[www.eaza.net](http://www.eaza.net)

[www.izea.net](http://www.izea.net)

# Best Practice Collection

## Polar bears and the ice

**Time required:** 15- 20 minutes

**Number of people:** it can be suitable for a whole class, or up to 25-30 children.

**Equipment needed:** non-slippery surfaced pieces of cloth, for example made from rubber like material, cut into a piece on which one can stand with two feet.

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### How to (description):

It follows the rules of the game called Musical Chairs. The educator places pieces of cloth on the floor, so that each player has one piece. Players are the polar bears; each player stands on a piece of cloth which becomes his or her hunting area, the ice-floe.

The players start hunting on a previously agreed signal among the floe, i.e. they step off it and start moving. While they are doing it, the educator removes one or two pieces of ice-floe. On a new signal, the players start finding an ice-floe for themselves, i.e. they step on the remaining ice-floes. Whoever cannot find an ice-floe, must leave the game.

The game can continue until only one or two ice-floes are left. The leader should make sure to place the remaining pieces of cloth apart from one another.

After the game you can discuss the long-term survival opportunities for the population with the players.

---

### Useful webpages:

[www.waza.org](http://www.waza.org)

[www.eaza.net](http://www.eaza.net)

[www.izea.net](http://www.izea.net)



# Best Practice Collection

## Animal training

**Time required:** 15- 20 minutes

**Number of people:** it can be suitable for a whole class, or up to 25-30 children

**Equipment needed:** clickers of different sound

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### How to (description):

Choose a volunteer from the group and send him/her away from the others where he/she cannot hear what the others are saying.

Meanwhile the others discuss with the leader what he/she is going to do after he/she returns: where he/she is going to stand, in what posture, should he/she hold something, should he/she do something etc. They also agree that the player with the clicker (the trainer) is only going to give a clicking sound upon seeing the posture or movement requested by the group, i.e. the trainer is going to give a sound reinforcing the movement. No sound is given upon a wrong movement. The entire game is played without any talking or the use of any other signals; the sound of the clicker is the only means of communication.

The game starts when the volunteer-player (who has previously been informed about the rules by the educator) returns to the group. The player should move slowly so that his/her movements could be observed and signalled upon clearly.

The essence of the game is that the player must find out what the group wants from him/her through reinforcements.

---

**Pitfalls and experience:** This game is very difficult, but it is really entertaining. First, we should give the player a very simple task in order to practice following the rules. It is equally difficult to use the clicker, i.e. the reinforcement; therefore, it is advisable to take turns among the trainers (people with the clickers) not only among the players.

**Variations:** It is even more difficult if several players are moving at the same time and they have to solve their tasks on signals given by different clickers of different sounds. In this case trainers can synchronize their signals and the required movements.

# Best Practice Collection

## Frog jump

**Time required:** 5-15 minutes

**Number of people:** 8-10

**Equipment needed:** small area, 2 scarfs

**Aim of exercise:** cooperation and getting acquainted with different frog species

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### How to (description):

The group is divided into two halves and lined up in a column after one another facing in the same direction. There are two scarfs is placed on the floor at least 3 meters from the players who are facing in that direction. The first two players in the line are given a signal upon which they start jumping like frogs (They hold their ankles firmly with their hands and bounce like frogs.) trying to reach their scarf first. When they reach it - without letting their ankles go - they raise the scarf with their toes above the ground, and then return (now they can run) to the end of their line in the meantime touching the shoulder of the first player in line. The next player in the line can start jumping like a frog towards the scarf when they have been touched on the shoulder, only jumping, and lifting the scarf up with their toes. This goes on until the last player in line comes, upon which that team wins whose player reaches and lifts their scarf first.

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**Variations:** Penalties can be given to those who start earlier, by sending them back to start again, or to those who stand up and not continue jumping like frogs, or those who lift the scarf with some other body part then their toes.

Before we start playing the game, there should be a short introduction about frogs, and their characteristics.

**Pitfalls and experiences:** If the classroom has pupils with disabilities, it is necessary to discuss with them beforehand, whether they want to participate. The game, because it brings out the competitive nature of students, can easily turn into a competition, which then makes students forget the whole body experience of being like frogs.

**Relevant literature, filmography:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwvBA5LmMg>



# Best Practice Collection

## Food web

**Time required:** 30 minutes

**Number of people:** ideal 8-15, but it works well with bigger groups also: 10-30

**Equipment needed:** Clews of string, animal-cards

**Aim of exercise:** To show the complex relations between animals (and people too)

**Preparation (if needed):**

The trainer prepares the animal-cards. Either writing the name of different animals on small pieces of paper or collecting and printing the pictures of the animals. The animals should be able to put into a food-web (so no one will be left out). We recommend to use species from your own country.

---

**How to (description):**

The group form a big circle. Everyone gets a an animal card. The leader gives the end of the string in the hand of a producer (plant) and asks:”Who will eat him/her?” The leader can help with different questions. If he/she answers the string will be carried to the mentioned herbivore. We go through the different food chain levels. The top predators will be decomposed by the decomposers. The inorganic materials will be used by plants and the circle begins again. One participant can hold the string many times. We play it until every member will take part in the food web. At the end we will have a tight web of string, which symbolises the balance of nature. Let`s see what happens if we remove a species - a certain participant releases the string. The balance breaks. With the disappearance of each species the web loses its strength and its role.

This exercise shows the complex relations between animals. The trainer can lead a discussion about how it is similar among humans - even though we don`t eat each other (hopefully...), there are complex hierarchies among us as well.

---

**Variations:**

At the first stage, the participants don`t show openly their cards but act as the animal and that`s how they have to figure out their food chain.

# Best Practice Collection

## Magical games

**Time required:** 10-20 minutes

**Number of people:** Any

**Equipment needed:** text of the relaxation/meditations

**Aim of exercise:** connecting to ourselves, relaxing, meditating

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### How to (description):

There are several relaxing/meditation sessions called „Magical games“ by Orsolya Goebel. There are different ones, many of them focus on animals. Some of them can be used as a warm-up exercise (eg. getting into pairs and massaging each other as if a group of swans would descend on a lake (the massaging person is the swans, the massaged person is the lake).

But there are others, which goes deeper and needs the participants to sit in silence, and imagine themselves for example as a flower/bee. With these ones the trainer reads or tells the instructions (eg. Imagine that you are a little bee. Where are you? Look around yourself. What do you see? Where do you want to go? Do you see something interesting you want to check? What do you smell? etc.) Through these questions the participants create an inner image of a situation, which reflect their inner thoughts, states, wishes.

After each session there is a discussion about the experience. The trainer can encourage them to try to find similarities between their imagined situation and their life.

---

# Best Practice Collection

## Play-back

**Time required:** 30 minutes

**Number of people:** 5-15

**Equipment needed:** -

**Aim of exercise:** seeing from outside an important memory

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### How to (description):

Everybody thinks about a situation with an animal from their past that is important for them. The group appoints a „storyteller“. 3-5 people from the group will be the actors. Those who want to, share their story with the others. After it's over, the storyteller summarizes the story in 5 sentences. S/he tells one sentence, which the actors express in a picture of themselves. The storyteller continues with the second sentence, the players change their picture to express this second sentence, etc.

The person who brought the story has the possibility to see the story from outside, it usually is an important self-reflection exercise, as seeing something from the outside might be different than how it feels from the inside. It can also show how others see a certain problem/situation. Typical feelings/attitudes (toward animals) can be expressed as well. The group can later discuss how the others would have felt in that situation. There can be 4-5 rounds/stories expressed.

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# Best Practice Collection

## Animal Consequences

**Time required:** 15 minutes

**Number of people:** ideal 10

**Equipment needed:** paper and pencils

**Aim of exercise:** reinforcing discussion around adaptation

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### How to (description):

Everybody sits in a circle, and has a piece of paper and a pencil. Players fold their paper into four, so that the folds run widthways. On the top panel they draw an animal's head - a bird, a lion, a crocodile, etc. Make the two lines of the neck just over onto the second panel. Players fold over their handiwork so that it cannot be seen, and pass to the person on their left. Players then draw the top part of an animal's body, and again pass on the piece of paper. The legs of the body and then the feet are also added in this way. Then pass on the completed animal to the player on the left. Players open out the 'mystery animal' and decide where they think it lives (has it got webbed feet? A tail suitable for helping to climb trees?). What it eats (has it a slender beak or a long tongue for drinking nectar? Sharp teeth for meat eating?). What it might get eaten by? (Try linking all the creations in an imaginary food web!). Give each animal a suitable name.

---

### Useful webpages:

<http://www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk/Environmental%20games%20and%20activities.pdf>

# Best Practice Collection

## Blind Eagle

**Time required:** 5-10 minutes

**Number of people:** 12-16

**Equipment needed:** blindfold, a rock or piece of wood

**Aim of exercise:** reinforcing discussion around adaptation

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### How to (description):

The eagle is blindfolded and sits cross-legged with the “treasure” (a rock or piece of wood) placed in front of him/her. The starting line for everyone else is about 5-6meter away from the eagle, and their object is to steal the treasure without being heard by the eagle. If the eagle hears someone, he/she points to them and they are out for that round. It’s best if you stand next to the eagle to judge if the eagle really hears someone. The eagle is not allowed to wave his hands around; the pointing has to be specific and the stealers are not allowed to run. This game can lead to a discussion on animal adaptations. Who is best suited for stealing the treasure? Why? Who was not suited? What would have made stealing easier?

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### Useful webpages:

<http://www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk/Environmental%20games%20and%20activities.pdf>

# Best Practice Collection

## Wise frogs

**Time required:** 15-30 minutes

**Number of people:** 15-30

**Equipment needed:** wire, string, chalk

**Aim of exercise:** strengthening team work and cooperation

---

### How to (description):

We form two teams of two different frog species: Common Toad and Common Frog. They just woke up after hibernation: they start to jump, the two species jump in different ways: with feet together, on one feet, squatting with hands on shoulders, etc. After they exercise their jumping they have to go to their mating sites, to a wetland where they lay their eggs. The wetland can be anything - a marked area. The road towards the wetland will be stoned in zigzag shapes which will be marked with chalk (or anything on which they can jump on easily).

The rule of the game: frogs will jump on the next or on the second stone. Only one frog can stand on one stone.

First frog species leaves; they have to reach the wetland to lay their eggs. After they occupy the half of the stones the other frog species leave as well. It's a logical game, co-working and cooperation will help to resolve the situation. It is important to place the "stones" in zigzag, in such a way that if the following stone is occupied the frog could easily jump on the third stone.

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**Variations:** The road of frogs is crossed by a road and sometimes a car goes by which hits a frog: the team leader touches the frog which will start his/her road from the beginning.

It is important to discuss the life cycle of frogs and the dangers lurking at them.



# Best Practice Collection

## Forced Analogy

**Time required:** 15 minutes to 1 hour

**Number of people:** 1-10

**Aim of exercise:**

We understand things by grouping them with other things of similar type and function. An airplane is similar to a helicopter; they're both flying things. Both are more similar to a bird, which is also a flying thing, than any of those things are to an earthworm, which is a crawling and tunnelling thing. The Forced Analogy game breaks these hard-wired categories and allows us to see things from a different angle, opening new possibilities in problem solving and idea generation.

**Equipment needed:** pieces of paper, a pen or pencil, fabric blindfolds for each player in the game

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**How to (description):**

Participants set up the exercise by generating a random list of things—animals, objects, or people. Write these items on individual index cards. For each item, write some of its qualities or attributes—for example, “An airplane flies through the air, moves along predefined routes, and has an autopilot feature.” Likewise, an oak tree would be noted for its branching structure, its deep roots, and its ability to grow from a very small seed. Participants shuffle the cards and distribute them randomly. They then use the cards to develop analogies to the problem or issue at hand, asking:

- How is this problem similar to [random object]?
- How would I solve this problem with [random object]?

Participants may also work through one analogy as a group, as in “How would we use a paper clip to solve our data integration problem?”

**Strategy:**

A truly random list of objects will push the boundaries of the group's mindset and create new perspectives. If needed, this list can be created in advance of the game itself by an unbiased nonparticipant.

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# Best Practice Collection

## Woolgame-Cobweb

**Time required:** minimum 10 minutes

**Number of people:** minimum 8 people

**Aim of exercise:** teambuilding, strengthening the self-expression, idea sharing, to know each other

**Equipment needed:** wool

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### How to (description):

Sit to the circle and start to circulate one wool. Raise a theme and start to recapitulate your opinion - just in keywords. After that pass the wool and the next participant add his/her opinion. When we pass the wool pay attention to keep one piece of wool, because the aim is to gradually make cobweb between the participants. After the discussion, brainstorming, lift the wool and for a minute stretch - with this we symbolize the convergence of the team. The game is suitable for new, evolving communities as an ice-breaker game, as reflexing during the discussions.

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# Best Practice Collection

## Navigator

**Time required:** minimum 15 minutes

**Number of people:** minimum 2

**Aim of exercise:** The aim of the game is to build trust among companions, develop attention concentration, spatial orientation.

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### How to (description):

We make pairs, and the blind-eyed partner of a child passes through the room, including obstacles (eg chair, table). Rule: One child can only take the elbow of his companion and navigate him orally: "Now turn a little right! Go straight on a few steps ... "

---

# Best Practice Collection

## Act the animals

**Time required:** 30 minutes

**Number of people:** 5-25

**Equipment needed:** Laptop/beamer to show short movies

**Aim of exercise:**

- To learn about animals' behaviours by acting as them
- To express emotions through our bodies
- Sensitivity towards deficiencies
- Working together, cooperation

**Preparation:**

Find short movies that show some typical behaviour of animals. It's good to focus on socially important behaviours (eg. how ants are clinging on each other when swimming through a lake/penguins guard their babies by standing around them/etc).

---

**How to (description):**

The participants are put into groups of 5. All the groups are representing one animal (of which we have the short movies: eg. ants) and are given a problem (eg. you have to cross the river). They have a few minutes to think about how they will solve and act this situation. After this short preparation they present their little situation to the others. The others have to guess what animal they are and what is the problem they have solved.

---

**Variations:** The groups can work with different topics as well.

- For example one group tells another one to present a certain animal (eg. an elephant), and the groups has to present the animal without preparation, right on the spot. Then this group can tell a third group what animal they should present. It is recommended to use native species.
- They can also focus on symbiotic relations (eg. show how a bird cleans the teeth of a crocodile). This can also include people with disabilities - showing how they can also be an important part of the whole, how their disability might be a strength in the group.
- The groups can also say not only showing an animal, but an animal with a certain emotion. Eg. „Come here like a rabbit who has lost all hope.“

# Best Practice Collection

## Bats and butterflies

**Time required:** 20 minutes

**Number of people:** 10-20

**Equipment needed:** -

**Aim of exercise:** To use our other senses than our eyes - becoming more in sync with ourselves and our environment and to build group spirit, trust

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### How to (description):

The group stands in a circle, taking each others' hands, they are forming the net/cage/cave. They choose among themselves one bat and one butterfly. The bat's eyes are closed/ is blindfolded, and s/he has to catch the butterflies by listening to where it moves.

The group can help the bat by making noises when the butterfly touches them.

---

### Variations:

The butterfly can also be blindfolded to make it more difficult. The group can use two different sounds, one for the bat, one for the butterfly.

Another variation of this game could be found at *Orientation of bats* game.

# Best Practice Collection

## Spider on the hand

**Time required:** 40 minutes (15 minutes with the animal, 25 minutes discussion)

**Number of people:** 4-15

**Aim of exercise:** Dealing with negative emotions (fear, disgust)

**Preparation:** Having a spider/snake and a person who knows the animal

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### How to (description):

Participants sit in a circle. Everybody takes their hands in front of them, so that the hands touch each other. The carer of the spider takes it in one of the hands and the participants let it walk through their circle of hands.

No one is forced to participate, if someone doesn't want to do it, others should let him/her stay out. But everybody is encouraged to join!

After there is a reflection on the experience. Everybody can share how they felt, if it was easy or difficult, how did they overcome their fear, disgust.

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**Variations:**We can use snakes as well instead of spiders.

**Pitfalls and experiences:** There needs to be someone there who knows the animal, for the sake of the animal (we shouldn't cause too much stress for it) and for safety (it shouldn't be dangerous to the participants).

# Best Practice Collection

## The blind people and the elephant

**Time required:** 20-30 minutes

**Number of people:** 5-8

**Equipment needed:** A big, complex object. Best, if we have a big statue of an animal. But it can be a shelf with different objects. Or a room with different objects in it.

**Aim of exercise:** To see that we have different perspectives, based on our subjective experiences. Sometimes we both can be right, though we have similar experiences. Sometimes conflicts are arising from these kind of different subjective experiences - if we try to understand others experiences, we don't need to have a conflict.

**Preparation:** We set up our object without the participants seeing it.

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### How to (description):

The participants are blindfolded. It is important, that they don't see anything. The trainer leads all of them, one by one, to the object/to the room and put their hands on one part of the object/one object in the room. Each participant touch different parts of the room, and they are not allowed to move. They can move their hands only a little.

After they are led out of the room. They have to decide what was the object, which kind of room they went into. Of course they had different experiences, so they will think differently. See, if they manage to get to an agreement.

After, the trainer can read the story of the six blind men and the elephant, about how our own perspective is only one side of the story generally.

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**Variations:** The participants get blindfolded and a plastic animal is given around. They have to guess what it is. If we want to make it more difficult, they can't move their hands around the animal, they can only sense it the way it was given into their hands.

We can also just read the story and discuss the moral with the participants.

**Pitfalls and experiences:** It might be difficult to find suitable object, or need lots of preparation about a room.

# Best Practice Collection

## Relevant literature:

The story:

Once upon a time there were six blind men. They lived in a town in India. They thought they were very clever. One day an elephant came into the town. The blind men did not know what an elephant looked like but they could smell it and they could hear it. 'What is this animal like?' they said. Each man touched a different part of the elephant.

The first man touched the elephant's body. It felt hard, big and wide. 'An elephant is like a wall' he said.

The second man touched one of the elephant's tusks. It felt smooth and hard and sharp. 'An elephant is like a spear' he said.

The third man touched the elephant's trunk. It felt long and thin and wiggly. 'An elephant is like a snake' he said.

The fourth man touched one of the legs. It felt thick and rough and hard and round. 'An elephant is like a tree' he said.

The fifth man touched one of the elephant's ears. It felt thin and it moved. 'An elephant is like a fan' he said.

The sixth man touched the elephant's tail. It felt long and thin and strong. 'An elephant is like a rope' he said.

The men argued. It's like a wall! No, it isn't! It's like a spear! No it isn't! It's like a snake! They did not agree. The king had been watching and listening to the men. 'You are not very clever. You only touched part of the elephant. You did not feel the whole animal. An elephant is not like a wall or a spear or a snake, or a tree or a fan or a rope'.

The men left the town still arguing. A little girl heard them and said 'Each of you is right but you are all wrong ... but I know what you are talking about'



# Best Practice Collection

## The jackal and the giraffe

**Time required:** 30-45 minutes

**Number of people:** 10-30

**Equipment needed:** Several jackall- and giraffe ears

**Aim of exercise:** Understanding how we communicate, getting aware, conscious of communicational patterns

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### How to (description):

The trainer presents the model of nonviolent communication and the language of jackalls and giraffes. Jackalls usually communicate in two ways: if the other is weaker than it, it attacks the other, but if the other is stronger, the jackall leaves quietly. Whereas the giraffes are big but very gentle - it could destroy it's enemy by one kick - but it doesn't want to.

This is the two basic patterns of communication: violent and nonviolent communication. To get more in the zone of the giraffe, we need to do the following steps:

1. Observation - do not interpret, just observe what the other is doing (but be precise!) („During the last week, only I was cleaning in the house.“)
2. Feeling - talk about what YOU feel („It makes me lonely if I am the only one cleaning.“)
3. Need - talk about what you need („I need some support.“)
4. Ask - If you need something, you can ask the other something („Please wash the dishes three times a week.“)

After presenting this model, the trainer demonstrated the two ways with a participant - they start to talk about a fictional or a real situation, and to show which strategy they use, they put a jackall or a giraffe ears on themselves. The whole group can see, where each scenarios lead.

After the demonstration, the participants get into pairs to practice the two kinds of communication, using the jackall/giraffe ears. After, they all share their experiences. The trainer encourages them to be conscious about their own communication strategies, when they use the jackall and when the giraffe.

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# Best Practice Collection

## Web-cam

**Time required:** on-going: at least 15 minutes per day for checking, 90 minutes for creating a way to share the experiences, 60 minutes for presentations (can vary due to the size of the group)

**Number of people:** 4-30 people, 1-5 people/camera

**Equipment needed:** internet, computer

**Aim of exercise:** Getting to know an animal in it's own area - developing a positive attitude („I know this bird!“)

**Preparation:** finding several active web-cameras

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### How to (description):

Everybody in the group has to pay attention to a web-camera during the training course. So at the first day, we already give them the instruction: check the chosen web-camera every day - they can look at it for a longer time, but spend at least 15 minutes / day to see what has happened during the past day.

We can prepare by finding active web-cameras (both from natural habitat, eg. with birds, and from zoos), and participants can choose which one they want to look at. They can also find their own camera if they want. They can form groups (max 5 people checking the same camera) and work together.

By the end of the training course, they will have to find a way to share with the group what they have learnt about the chosen animal. They can be encouraged to be artistic, e.g. create a little play about it, paint their impressions on a poster, write a poem, etc. They should focus on the following points:

- why choosing that particular animal
- personal impression about the animal
- what did s/he learnt about the animal (daily habits, what does it eat, how many babies...)
- a memorable moment during the week

# Best Practice Collection

**Pitfalls and variations:** They can work on it every day, when they want, but there will be 90 minutes appointed to create the presentation at the last day. At the end, the group can reflect on the experience. They can discuss the difference between animals in their natural habitat vs. at a zoo.

## Useful webpages:

Live web cameras from all over the world:

<http://explore.org/live-cams/player/african-animal-lookout-camera>

<http://www.earthcam.com/events/animalcams/>

<http://www.mangolinkcam.com/>

Web-cameras in Hungary: <http://filmdzsungel.tv/webkamerak/>



# Best Practice Collection

## The Mating game

**Time required:** 10-15 minutes

**Number of people:** 10-20

**Equipment needed:** blindfolds, a Noise Maker, different texture clothes, different jars with a particular odour, different jars with food item

### How to (description):

Divide the players into pairs, and give each pair the name of a herbivore. Each pair is given the opportunity to devise a strategy for 30 seconds before each round of the game is played.

One person is chosen to be the carnivore. He is given the noise-maker and a blindfold. The pairs of herbivores divide after their strategy session, and each moves to opposite ends of the playing area (an open field is ideal). There, they put on their blindfolds.

On "go" each half of the pair tries to locate his partner. The carnivore stands at the center of the playing area, and tries to capture (tag) as many herbivores as possible. The carnivore may stand still and remain quiet, but every time he walks or runs he is required to use the noise-maker, so that herbivores will know that he is on the prowl. If a herbivore is tagged before he finds his mate, he loses a life. When a player has lost five lives, he is eliminated from the game.

Each time the game is played, the herbivores are asked to locate their mate by different methods, as listed below:

1. Sound - a pre-arranged mating call is given when a herbivore touches one knee to the ground. No sound may be made when players are moving forward.
2. Touch - a silent game in which each person has a piece of cloth, which is matched (in texture) to his partner's piece of cloth.
3. Smell - Each pair is given a jar with a particular odour. Partners must find the mate with the same odour.
4. Taste - Each pair is given a small jar with a food item. Players taste other player's food items until they locate the one who has the same taste.

**Variations:** it can be played without the carnivore.

**Useful webpages:** <http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/site/camp-activities/nature-games.page-1.html>



# Best Practice Collection

## Bird feeder

**Time required:** 60 minutes

**Number of people:** 1-25

**Equipment needed:** plastic bottle, mesh bag (from lemon, orange, potato etc.), non-salted sunflower seed, fat (grease), milk box, string/wire, scissors, newspapers.

**Aim of exercise:** Strengthening team work, cooperation, creativity, responsibility

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### How to (description):

We prepare bird feeders reusing different materials. We can work in teams or if there's enough material every person can prepare a bird feeder. It is important that bird feeders are used only during wintertime and it has to be refilled periodically with seeds. Only those can place a bird feeder in their garden, window, whom have the responsibility to refill it every time it's needed. Birds will get used with the bird feeder and if they will find it empty on a harsh wintertime it could cost their life.

Plastic bottle/milk box: we remove the paper from the plastic bottle. We cut a 10 cm height windows on the bottle's sides and fill it with seeds. We tie the neck with a string to hang it on a tree.

Mesh bag: we mix fat with seeds and we make a dumpling which we place into mesh bag. We tie it together and hang it on a tree. Through the small holes of the bag birds will eat the greasy seeds.

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**Pitfalls and experiences :** Most people are enthusiastic at the beginning of such projects but if birds will not visit the feeders they will surrender easily. For birds the feeder's refilling is a matter of life and death.

### Relevant literature, filmography:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yV6V6rtpyc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Op0lAlGDDkl>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgWhQu-6iqY>

# Best Practice Collection

## Food web

**Time required:** 30-40 minutes

**Number of people:** 20 (min. 10, max. 30)

**Equipment needed:** pictures of different elements from the food chain (producers (plants), herbivores, predators, top predators, decomposers), string

**Aim of exercise:** To get acquainted with the food web importance the different roles of species in nature

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### How to (description):

The group form a big circle. Everyone gets a picture, the leader gives the end of the string in the hand of a producer (plant) and asks: "Who will eat him/her?" The leader can help with different questions. If he/she answers the string will be carried to the mentioned herbivore. We go through the different food chain levels. The top predators will be decomposed by the decomposers. The inorganic materials will be used by plants and the circle begins again. One participant can hold the string many times. We play it until every member will take part in the food web. At the end we will have a tight web of string, which symbolises the balance of nature.

Let`s see what happens if we remove a species - a certain participant releases the string. The balance breaks. With the disappearance of each species the web loses its strength and its role.

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# Best Practice Collection

## How do they eat? (A game with beaks)

**Time required:** 20-60 minutes

**Number of people:** 15 (min. 5, max. 25)

**Equipment needed:** models of different bird species' beaks, pictures of the bird species

**Aim of exercise:** Getting acquainted with different type of beaks, improving skilfulness

**Preparation:** Prepare models of the bird species' beaks and their food (at least the number of participants), pictures of the species. Example: **Snipe:** they search invertebrates (ex. worms) from the sand with their long bills (beaks). We use long wooden or metal forceps as their bills and short coloured wires as worms in sand. **Chaffinch:** they are seed eater and have strong bills. We use cloth tweezers as their bills and seeds. **Swallow:** they have short, smooth bills and hunt for insects. Two small paper cone on the thumb and index finger represents the bill, the food will be plastic insects. **Goose:** they filter their food form water (they have comb-like structures around the edge of their beak). We use teas-trainer as their beak and fish food. **Woodpecker:** they capture their food using their long tongue covered in sticky saliva from under the bark of trees. We put two sided sticker on a rod and as food we put holes on a plastic bottle filled with strings.

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### How to (description):

We split the participants in groups in as many species we have. Every team gets a picture of a bird, they have to guess the name, what kind of bill it has and what it eats. After guessing they try how the beaks work. After a while they switch teams.

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**Variations:** We can organize competitions, which team (type of beak) can gather the most food on a given time.

### Useful webpages:

<http://www.arkive.org/common-snipe/gallinago-gallinago/>  
<http://www.arkive.org/chaffinch/fringilla-coelebs/>  
<http://www.arkive.org/barn-swallow/hirundo-rustica/>  
<http://www.arkive.org/greylag-goose/anser-anser/>

# Best Practice Collection

## Owl pellet analyse

**Time required:** 60 minutes

**Number of people:** 1-30

Equipment needed: owl pellet (usually Long-Eared Owl but any kind of pellet can be used), rubber glove, toothbrush (used ones are good as well), newspapers, medical tweezers (optional), surgical mask (optional), pictures of bones/small mammals' skeleton, glue (optional), beading wire (optional) , beads of different colours.

**Aim of exercise:** To fight fear and disgust, understanding the digestive system of owl, developing creativity and patience

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### How to (description):

Owl pellets are undigested parts of their prey (mainly composed of the small mammals' hair and bones), which they cannot digest so they regurgitate it as small hairballs. These can be found in different places where owls are nesting, roosting, in church towers, attics of old building, farms, houses, etc.

At least two people have to be in one team (but participants can work individually as well), one of them will have to work with the pellets. After talking about the owl species, its' hunting area and prey, every team gets 1-3 owl pellet and tools for dissection. Each team will dissect the pellets, clean the bones. They have to accomplish the following tasks:

- finding different jaws and skulls (shrews, mice, voles have different type of teeth, bird bills).
- finding different bones of small mammals: pelvic bone, forelimb, scapula, rib, vertebrae, fibula, tibia, femur

After identifying the bones there are several variations that can be done with the dissected bones:

- they can build a small mammal skeleton scale-model by gluing the bones on a paper
- they can create jewellery (necklaces, bracelet) using bones and beads.

Owl pellets can be collected together during a field trip.

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**Pitfalls and experiences:** Procuring the owl pellet could be hard for unexperienced people, but asking a person/institution who is working in conservation could help.



# Best Practice Collection

The hair from the pellets must be thrown away right away.

If we are working outdoor the wind blows away the hair and bones from the table.

Some pellets contain only one kind of bones (ex. wintering Long-eared Owls usually feed upon voles) so it could be frustrating if neither team will find something “interesting” than the others.

## Relevant literature, filmography, etc. :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9azuEJnlQs>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dvX7j7\\_xpk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dvX7j7_xpk)

[https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Owlpellets\\_tcm9-133500.pdf](https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Owlpellets_tcm9-133500.pdf)

# Best Practice Collection

## Pictures with plants

**Time required:** 60 min.

**Number of people:** make small groups of 4-5 persons

**Equipment needed:** paper, glue, (outdoor)

**Aim of exercise:** Plants show a great diversity of forms illustrated by differences between their leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds.

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### How to (description):

A collection of natural items is used to show differences in diversity, colour and composition between habitats. These items (obtained without damaging the plants) can then be used creatively to produce pictures which records these characteristics.

Small pieces of plants (a leaf for example) will stick to paper quite easily. Participants can use this idea to:

1. Produce a record of the variety of colour within a habitat, or the variety of shades. It is interesting to see what range of greens are available!
2. Collect examples of each leaf shape onto cards and use this as a check list to compare areas. This idea can be taken further by collecting items to make pictures, perhaps of people or animals.

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**Variations:** - Collect only small amounts of windfall material or from common wildflowers (eg. common weeds) around the school. Make sure that you collect them as dry as possible. Take any flower heads apart and place the pieces on an absorbent paper. Sandwich this with newspaper and leave with a heavy weight on them for a few weeks.

**Pitfalls and experiences:** we recommend to collect only small pieces of plants, the best dead parts.

# Best Practice Collection

## Nature scavenger hunt

**Time required:** It depends of the list, 30 minutes - 4 hours

**Number of people:** ideally 3 groups, with 4-5 (3-8) people (min. 1 group, max. 6 to discuss/debate the results)

**Equipment needed:** worksheet, natural environment

**Aim of exercise:** A walk in nature with guided attention. It is a good opportunity for any age to keep one`s eye peeled and to discover the interesting facts and associations in nature.

**Preparation:** Forming groups, distributing, worksheets, defining the game area

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### How to (description):

Every group has to search the tasks listed on their worksheet. The number of tasks used in the game depends on the time we have. Usually 10-20 tasks can be completed in an hour.

Examples for tasks:

- Something which leans towards the sun
- Something that hides from the sun
- Something that can become a cloud
- Something which tells you that the wind is blowing
- Something that is formed after the rain
- An animal sign, which in tradition forecasts the weather
- An unsuitable place while thunderstorm
- A place where you can cool down
- Feather
- A seed blown by the wind
- Exactly 100 of something
- Maple/sycamore leaves
- Spine (Not prickles!)

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- Bone
- Natural tree-hole
- Potentially a good material for bird nest
- Signs that suggest the presence of animals
- Anthill
- Burrows of animals that live (mostly) underground
- Three different seed
- Camouflaged insect (or other animal)
- Something round
- A piece form an egg
- Something sharp
- Something fuzzy
- A piece of fur
- Five garbage thrown by people
- Something utterly straight
- Something beautiful
- Something that has no role in nature\*
- A bitten leave (Don` t you bite it!)
- Something which makes sounds
- Something white
- Something important in nature\*
- Something that you think it is similar to you
- Something soft
- Something that collects the energy of the sun
- A big smile
- *(We have more tasks, if this game will be chosen)*

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\*Tricky task, in nature everything has its own role, except which is introduced by people.

The task should be completed by collecting, taking pictures or simply by explaining. At the end the results will be discussed together, to share experiences, feelings.

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**Variations:** The list of tasks can be done on one time but if the groups are together for more days, ex. in camps, it can be sorted on categories (weather, nature's gains, animal sign etc.) and accomplished on a longer time.

The search for the tasks can be made during a trip or the participants scatter from a given point.

**Pitfalls and experiences:** Defining the search area: we have to be careful not to get someone lost. Usually this task can be found in a small area. In groups formed by older participants it might happen that someone will not be willing to take part in the game.

# Best Practice Collection

## Life saving float

**Time required:** 40 minutes

**Number of people:** the whole class

**Equipment needed:** newspapers the same that the class numbers +2, evolve enough place in the classroom for the exercise

**Aim of exercise:** Amplification of the empathy, solving the potential tension inside the group through the game.

### How to (description):

We can ask the students: “Does a higher goal exist for which we can work together?” The game begins with a narrative: “Imagine, that on a beautiful, hot day of summer all of you are in the fresh water of a big lake/river/sea, swimming and enjoying the sunshine. But it’s common that this lake/river/sea occasionally is visited by a shark. It swims around looking for a victim, and if it doesn’t find anything there, it leaves.” Because of this danger, the group should choose one of them to the person who announces the danger by shouting “Shark!”. After this, all the swimmers in the lake have to get onto pieces of wood which float in the lake paying attention that all parts of their bodies are out of the water. Pieces of wood are very small, and usually there should be more than one swimmer on each piece. The point of the game is that the students have to help each other to keep themselves out of water, otherwise the shark is going to eat them. We place pieces of newspapers on the floor, which are going to symbolize the wooden pieces and the floor is the water. The students choose their overwatch. He/she can shout “Shark!” whenever they please.

At the start of the game everyone pretends to be swimming by keeping on moving on the floor (which symbolizes water). When the overwatch shouts “Shark!” everyone has to get on the piece of newspaper, and help each other to get on before he/she counts to five. If somebody’s either part of the body is on the floor, he/she becomes the victim of the shark. (That person can now help the leader of the game decide whether the other players are in the right position on the newspapers, not touching water. After each shark attack we reduce the number of newspapers on the floor. In the end, at a certain number of living players the game is stopped. The game should be followed by a discussion.

**Variations:** The discussion leading questions are: How did you help each other? Did I let others help me? To the overwatch: What was it like looking at the others when they had to rescue each other? What was the best / the most surprising / interesting? To the victims of

# Best Practice Collection

the shark: What was it like getting on the piece of wood? What happened when your body touched the water?

To those who escaped: How did you manage to stay alive every time? What was it like seeing others fall into the water?

To all: How are your experiences from the game parallel to your real life situations.



# Best Practice Collection

## Attracting the four elements

**Time required:** 35 minutes

**Number of people:** the whole class is divided in four groups

**Equipment needed:** Colour Pencils, Paint, Newspaper Cutters, Glue, Scissors, Yarns, Large Posters, Twisting Needles, or Tweezers

**Aim of exercise:** To draw attention to nature, to tune the subject.

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### How to (description):

Groups make artwork on the topic: What does fire / water / air / earth mean to me? Get as much information as you can about your own item!

At the end of the work, we are organizing an exhibition of the works, the students are conducted around in a few minutes everyone presents the created work. Meanwhile, others can ask the artists about the exhibited work.

Dangerous experiences: Group demolition can be done with cut postcards (with the symbols of the four elements, proportionally to the number of slots as many students in the classroom). The students find their peers who have the same pieces of the same postcard to form a group.

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# Best Practice Collection

## Phone- keep and quit the call

**Time required:** 40-45 minutes of play + 10 minutes of discussion

**Number of people:** small group max 10-12, age: 10+

**Aim of exercise:** To develop empathy skills and to become acquainted with myself

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### How to (description):

Players are sitting around. They are in a row and each player calls someone out of the group for some reason. Let's make sure that everybody is just a caller and a called party once.

The caller seeks to keep the line longer.

The called party is in the opposite position to disconnect the line as soon as possible. Call it as long as it's interesting for the conversation. Then he tries to put the handset down but cannot do it. The phone call can only be completed if satisfactory results have been obtained for both parties.

You have to make the conversation so that the caller can see that he has nothing to talk about.

After a couple of minutes, talk about each pair, what was the problem, what was to be solved, what advice and help did they come up with.

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**Variations:** If we play with an older age group, it's okay for the leader to include role-play scenarios: I'm confused with my best friend's actions and don't know what to do, I have an argument with my parents for not letting me go to a party because I have failed an exam, I received a bad mark and now have to talk to the teacher, My friend is about to do something he will later regret, and I am trying to give him advice.







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Learning Humanity from Animals

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