

# House Hunting

## Background

Birds build their nests in all kinds of places. Some nest high in trees while others nest on the ground. Some plaster their nests on the sides of buildings or rocky cliffs and others build floating nests in marshy areas. Many birds also nest in tree cavities, stream banks, fields and swamps. Birds also use a variety of nesting materials to build their nests, including sticks, mud, stones, lichens, grass, spider webs, snake skins and thistledown.

Some birds are adaptable nest builders. It seems they'll build their nests wherever they can find a spot and use whatever materials they can find. But other birds are much pickier and will build their nests only in certain places and use only certain materials.

In this activity, you will take your kids outside to your schoolyard or a nearby park where the kids can pick the perfect site to build a nest and then try to build one themselves. Although many primary-age children can't do the research part of the activity, they can go on a hike to look for nests and good nesting sites and try to build their own nests.

## Activity

1. Write down on slips of paper the names of five common birds that live in your area. Choose birds that nest in your schoolyard or a nearby park if possible.
2. Divide the group into five teams and have each team pick one slip.
3. Explain that each team is a real estate agent hired by the bird on their slip of paper. Each group's job is to find the perfect nest site for their bird.
4. Pass out the House Hunting Worksheets to each person. Explain that each person must research their group's bird, filling in the blanks on the worksheet.
5. After each person has filled out their worksheet, take the group outside to the schoolyard or a nearby park to look for different habitats for birds.
6. Each person should search for a spot that their bird would like as a nest-building site. Remind them that most birds build their nests near a food source and that the nests are usually sheltered from rain, hot sun and other types of weather. Also tell them that many birds hide their nests so predators can't spot them.
7. Give everyone 15 minutes to find the perfect spot and then have everyone gather back together. Have each team describe their bird and its requirements for a nesting site. Then visit the nest sites for each bird with the groups and talk about the pros and cons of the location (this one's too exposed, this one's too far away from water, this one would get run over by a lawnmower, and so on).
8. After visiting all the nest sites for one bird, take a vote on which person found the best nesting site.



### Objectives

- Describe the nests of three common birds
- Identify good nest building sites for birds
- Build a specific type of bird nest, using the same materials a bird would use.

### Grade Level

3-5

### Subject

Science

### Materials

- House Hunting worksheet
- Bird research books or internet access
- Slips of paper
- Pencils
- Nest building materials
- Bags for collecting nest building materials

9. Have each group gather the materials they need to make a nest for their bird using the same (or similar) materials the bird would use. Warn the children not to pick flowers or pull living plants or destroy actual nests. It is against the law to remove or damage a nest in the wild, even if it is old or abandoned.
10. Either outside or inside, have each group work together to build a nest for their bird. The group should aim to build a nest of the correct size and shape.
11. When the groups are done, have each group show their nest to the other groups and talk about what their bird's nest is like.

## House Hunting Worksheet

1. Name your bird: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Draw a picture of your bird:

3. Describe your bird's habitat. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What does your bird eat? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What kind of nest does your bird build or use? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Where does your bird usually nest? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. What time of year does your bird nest? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



8. Draw a picture of your bird's nest:

9. How many eggs does your bird usually lay? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Draw a picture of your bird's egg:

