

Where's My Pod?

(Pre-visit)

Grade Level: 2nd-5th

Purpose: This activity will help demonstrate how marine mammals use sounds such as whistles and clicks to keep members together and help identify different pods. Students will use various sounds to find their own pods.

Materials:

- Dark room (preferred) or blindfolds
- Large cleared area
- Plastic whistles, spoons, party blower, other types of noise makers
- Paper bags

Teacher Background Information:

Marine mammals often have to depend on sound to communicate with others and to navigate their ocean world. Sound is more useful than sight for several reasons. Sound travels in all directions, will travel farther and move faster in water than in air, which makes it perfect for communication between different marine mammals and between groups of marine mammals.

Some marine mammals such as dolphins and killer whales often travel in groups, which are called pods. These pods usually consist of mothers and their offspring, related females, and some males. Within the pod individual dolphins have been found to have their own signature whistle which helps to identify that specific dolphin to the rest of its pod mates. With killer whales the pod creates its own “dialect” or repertoire of calls. This mixture of calls, which each whale participates in, creates a song distinctive to the pod. Calls can also change for various seasons and will help animals that are solitary (such as humpbacks) find others of its species when its time to mate or for other social interaction.

Procedure:

- 1) Demonstrate the noisemakers and explain that they each have their own types of noisemakers in their bags. Each type of noisemaker represents a different “pod”. They will need to listen for others in the room who are making the same sound that they are.
- 2) Give each student a bag with one of the noisemakers inside and a blindfold (unnecessary if you are in a dark room). Students can open their bags but cannot tell anyone what type of noisemaker they have.
- 3) Once everyone is ready have the students open their bag and start making their noise. They need to listen for their sound and then try to move towards where the sounds are coming from until they find each other. **Warning:** likely to be very noisy and confusing. If students are blindfolded try to remove any obstacles.
- 4) Once everyone has found their “pod” have them take off their blindfolds and discuss how it felt to only have sound as a guide.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why would animals in the ocean depend on sound rather than sight for communication?
- 2) Do marine mammals change the sounds they produce depending on the season?
- 3) What else can sound be used for especially when considering marine mammals that don't live in pods?
- 4) Do marine mammals only make whistle sounds or do they make other sounds as well?