

What is Animal Enrichment?

In this episode of Scarlet's Adventures, we learned about animal enrichment here at the aquarium. We learned that enrichment is used to keep the mind healthy and active, as well as encourage the animals to do natural behaviors. Enrichment often falls into a few categories including habitat, toys, sensory, food, and cognitive. Habitat enrichment changes the animal's habitat by adding new elements. Toys are new objects that might be exciting to the animal. Sensory enrichment includes new scents or sounds. Food enrichment means the keeper presents food from the animal's normal diet in a new or challenging way so the animal has to work for their food, just as they would in the wild. Finally, cognitive enrichment is a process that helps the animal exercise their mind, often in the form of positive reinforcement training.



In positive reinforcement training, a keeper asks the animal to do a certain behavior, then gives a reward when they do the correct behavior. This takes a lot of time and patience, because the animal might not understand what you are asking at first. In order to learn more about this type of training, here is a simple activity you can do: begin by asking a friend to leave the room. You must decide what you would like that person to do when they return, but you cannot tell them. You could want them to jump on one foot, pat their head, lie

down, or something similar. When the person returns, they should begin trying different things. As they get closer to doing the action you want, clap quietly. When they get closer, clap louder and louder until they arrive at the desired behavior. Once the person successfully does the behavior, reward them with a treat!

Another way to experience enrichment just as an animal would, is by creating a food enrichment item for yourself or someone you live with. Often with food enrichment, keepers will freeze an animal's favorite food into ice, so the animal has to work to get their food out. This could easily be done at home by creating a popsicle with food you might like, such as fruit! See how long it takes to get the fruit out of your popsicle.