



Theme: Animal Friends

## Animal Tracks

**Objective:** The children will make footprints and compare them to different types of animal tracks.

### What You Will Need

- Pictures of animal footprints, such as deer, rabbit, bear, fox, squirrel, raccoon, wolf (see Lesson Tips)
- Pictures of animals that match those tracks (see Lesson Tips)
- Butcher paper – 1 strip about 6' long
- Tempera paint – 1 bottle, any color
- Paintbrushes – for adult use
- Paper plates – 1 per adult
- Basin with soapy water
- Towels

### What To Do

**Note:** Before the activity, place some paint on a paper plate for each teacher who will be painting the children's feet.

1. Display and discuss the animal pictures and corresponding footprints (see Guiding Student Inquiry).
2. Have the children notice different aspects (number of toes, pads of feet, and claws) of each of the different footprints.
3. Explain that the children will be making footprints using paint on paper and then comparing them with the animal footprints.
4. Working with one child at a time, paint the bottoms of the children's feet with the paint, ask them to describe how this feels, and have them walk on the butcher paper (see Lesson Tips).
5. Label each child's footprints.
6. Wash off their feet in the basin, and dry with a towel.
7. When the children's footprints are dry, have them compare their footprints to the animal footprints (see

## Guiding Student Inquiry

- Describe the size of footprint you think a (bear, rabbit, deer, fox, or other animal) might make.
  - Describe the difference between a bear print and a deer print (toes and hoof).
  - Tell me which animal you think might make the largest footprint. The smallest?
  - Explain where you think we might find a footprint like this.
  - Tell me which of these animals you think we could find where we live.
  - Describe how the tracks you left are different from the tracks the animal left. How are they the same?
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## Explore, Extend & Integrate

- You could include tracks from animals around the world such as lions, elephants, hippopotamuses, kangaroos, and so on.
  - Take a look around at the types of surfaces in your classroom and on the playground. Ask the children if we leave tracks behind after we walk on the carpet, tile, or dirt. Why or why not?
  - In the science area, provide plastic animals, ink pads, and paper for the children to make “animal footprints.”
  - Place the pictures of the animal footprints in the science area. Have the children sequence the footprints from largest to smallest.
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## Check for Children’s Understanding

- Could children compare the sizes of the animal footprints?
- Could children explain where footprints might be found?
- Could children tell which of the animals might be found locally?
- Were children able to describe the differences and similarities between their own footprints and the footprints of the animals?

### Did You Know?

All mammals that move on the ground have padded feet and can leave tracks. Both people and animals can leave footprints; animals with paws leave paw prints, and animals with hooves leave hoof prints. Animal prints can differ from human footprints in size, shape, and number of toes. Sometimes, the tracks can be seen for a long time after the animal or person has left the area. Animal tracks can be used to study their behavior and tell us a little bit about their habitats. Some animals—like black bears, for instance—use the same tracks over and over again.

Animal scientists are called biologists. Wildlife biologists study animal tracks to learn more about the animals’ natural habitats. They observe and track animals so they can learn about animal needs. Scientists can sometimes tell the size and age of an animal just by looking at their tracks. These scientists help us to understand the animals and make recommendations to help protect them and their natural habitats.

### Vocabulary

- **animal** – one of a large group of living things that is not a plant.
- **track** – a mark left on the ground by the feet of people or animals.
- **footprint** – a mark made by a foot that is pressed onto a surface.

- **compare** – to say how one thing is similar to or different from another thing.
- **habitat** – the natural environment of an animal or plant.
- **biologist** – a scientist who studies living things.

### Lesson Tips

- If children do not want to have their feet painted, either trace their feet on the paper or let them use water to make a print and color it in with chalk or paint.
- Try to get the children to walk in different places on the paper so that each child's tracks are separated.
- Search online for printable animal tracks and pictures of animals.

### Books

- *Footprints in the Snow* by Cynthia Benjamin
- *Big Tracks, Little Tracks: Following Animal Prints* by Millicent E. Selsam
- *Tracks in the Snow* by Wong Herbert Yee
- *Footprints in the Sand* by Cynthia Benjamin

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### Common Core State Standards Initiative

These lessons are aligned with the Common Core State Standards ("CCSS"). The CCSS provide a consistent, clear understanding of the concepts and skills children are expected to learn and guide teachers to provide their students with opportunities to gain these important skills and foundational knowledge.<sup>[2]</sup>

🔗 [Visit the CCSS website](#)