

Blindfold Surprise!

Objectives

To heighten awareness of and curiosity about objects by blocking sight. To increase sensitivity of hearing, smell, and touch. To increase verbal communication skills. (Many other objectives depending upon objects chosen.)

Ideal Number: 8 to 12

Time: 45 minutes

Materials Needed

- 1 blindfold for each participant
- 1 object per student as per your objectives (skulls, leaves, woods, seeds, nuts, rocks, fruit, etc.)

Preparation

Prepare blindfolds for each student (or have them do it). Gather objects. Depending upon objectives, you might want some general knowledge in a subject area beforehand. For example, in using skulls, students should understand the concepts of predator and prey, herbivore and carnivore. Alternately, you might use this technique to introduce a unit on geology with no preparation. Or, you might follow *Your Own Tree* with a Blindfold Surprise! with leaves to introduce tree identification. What you do in preparation depends upon your objectives.

On-Site Procedure

Seat participants in a circle. As you are passing out blindfolds, explain that you are going to give each one an object. Tell them that they should get to know their objects in any way they can **without** using their eyes. Get to know it well enough to pick it out of a pile of similar objects. (You may need to reassure them that you're not giving them something that might hurt them—"Trust me!") Ask them not to say anything as you hand out the objects. Place the extras in the center.

Ask a series of questions to help each student get to know the object. Students should answer to themselves. There are many possible questions, such as: How big is the object compared to your hand? Does it have any rough or sharp places or is it smooth? Is the texture uniform or does it

change? How hard is it? Does it have any "caves" in it? Could you hide in it if you were a spider? Does it remind you of the shape of some letter of the alphabet or common household utensil? What does it smell like? Is it hollow or solid?

Next, ask each participant to describe his/her object to the group **without** using its name or the names of its parts. (This gets everyone to verbalize and often brings out otherwise shy people.) Listen carefully as the descriptions are often incredibly creative!

After all the descriptions, ask students to take one last feel of the objects and pick them up, placing them in the center with the extras. (**Hint:** Devise a system for remembering who had what.) When all objects are in the center, blindfolds can come off. Ask them to first try to spot their own objects with just their eyes. When they are sure, they may retrieve their own. Much hubbub and comparison usually follows. If any have difficulty, closing their eyes often helps. (**Alternative:** Instead of picking their objects immediately, have them draw their own objects as they visualized them; then find the actual objects and compare.)

Place the objects in groups (perhaps asking students to decide how to group them) and discuss. (Note: The discussion is the meat of this activity and proceeds based on your objectives. For example, skulls might be grouped as herbivores vs. carnivores and students could discuss adaptations. Rocks might be grouped according to hardness, with discussion of rock type formation. Leaves might be grouped into smooth and hairy, with discussion of adaptations or identification.) Whatever the case, I've found it best not to **name** anything until the rest of the concepts I want to bring out are presented and discussed. Once a label is on the object, they often stop thinking.

Follow-Up

Naturally, the follow-up depends upon the objects used and the objectives accomplished. Skulls may lead to other research on predators and prey or displays of other kinds of adaptations. Rocks may lead to other activities dealing with geology or investigation of crystals, volcanoes, glaciers, or local geology. Leaves may branch out (sorry!) into displays and identification or research on plant adaptations. Your creativity and that of your students is the only limit!