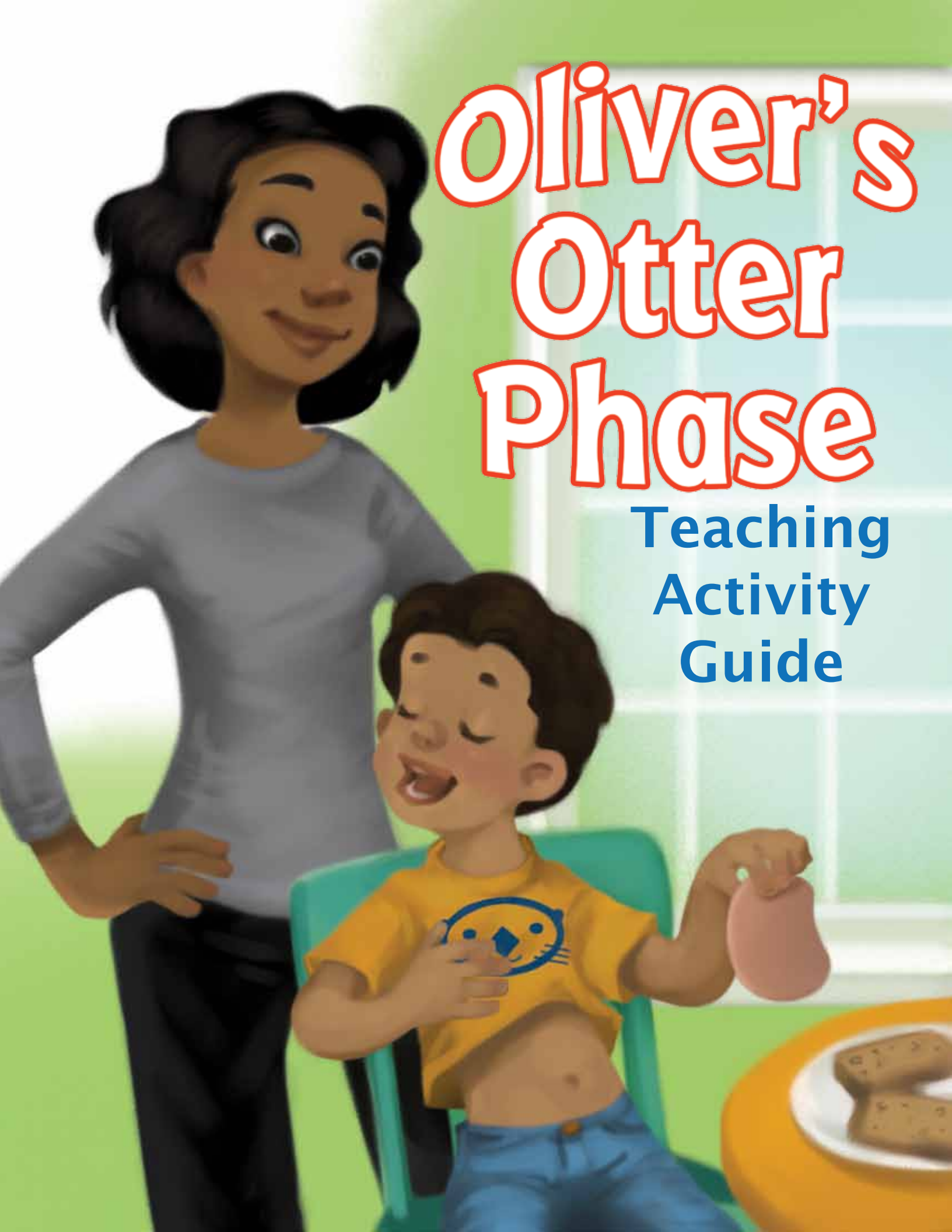
Oliver's Otter Phase
Teaching Activity Guide

Table of Contents

3 How to Use This Activity Guide (General)
4 What Do Children Already Know?
5 Pre-Reading Questions
5 Comprehension Questions & Writing Prompts
6 Observation Skills: Art Scavenger Hunt
7 Language Arts: Sequence Sentence Strips
9 Word Search
10 Classifying Animals
11 Animal Chart
12 Dichotomous (Yes/No) Key
13 Compare/Contrast: Animal and Human Senses
14 Science Journal (Vocabulary)
16 Math Cards
18 Art Sequencing
21 Answers
22 Appendix A—"What Children Know" Cards
23 Appendix B—Venn Diagram

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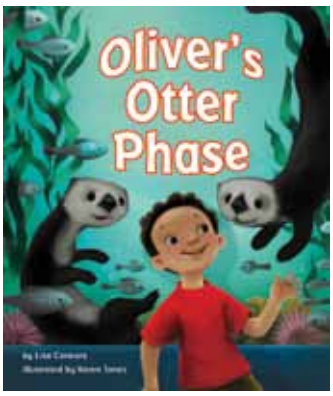


by Lisa Connors
illustrated by Karen Jones

How to Use This Activity Guide (General)

There are a wide variety of activities that teach or supplement all curricular areas. The activities are easily adapted up or down depending on the age and abilities of the children involved. And, it is easy to pick and choose what is appropriate for your setting and the time involved. Most activities can be done with an individual child or a group of children.

For teachers in the classroom: We understand that time is at a premium and that, especially in the early grades, much time is spent teaching language arts. All Arbordale titles are specifically selected and developed to get children excited about learning other subjects (science, geography, social studies, math, etc.) while reading (or being read to). These activities are designed to be as comprehensive and cross-curricular as possible. If you are teaching sentence structure in writing, why not use sentences that teach science or social studies? We also know and understand that you must account for all activities done in the classroom. While each title is aligned to all of the state standards (both the text and the For Creative Minds), it would be nearly impossible to align all of these activities to each state's standards at each grade level. However, we do include some of the general wording of the CORE language arts and math standards, as well as some of the very general science or social studies standards. You'll find them listed as "objectives" in italics. You should be able to match these objectives with your state standards fairly easily.

For homeschooling parents and teachers in private schools: Use as above. Aren't you glad you don't have to worry about state standards?

For parents/caregivers: Two of the most important gifts you can give your child are the love of reading and the desire to learn. Those passions are instilled in your child long before he or she steps into a classroom. Many adults enjoy reading historical fiction novels . . . fun to read but also to learn (or remember) about historical events. Not only does Arbordale publish stories that are fun to read and that can be used as bedtime books or quiet "lap" reading books, but each story has non-fiction facts woven through the story or has some underlying educational component to sneak in "learning." Use the "For Creative Minds" section in the book itself and these activities to expand on your child's interest or curiosity in the subject. They are designed to introduce a subject so you don't need to be an expert (but you will probably look like one to your child!). Pick and choose the activities to help make learning fun!

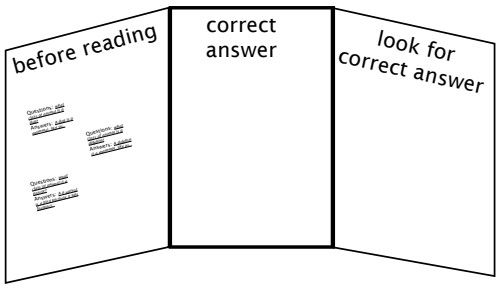
For librarians and bookstore employees; after-school program leaders; and zoo, aquarium, nature center, park & museum educators: Whether reading a book for story time or using the book to supplement an educational program, feel free to use the activities in your programs. We have done the "hard part" for you.

What Do Children Already Know?

Young children are naturally inquisitive and are sponges for information. The whole purpose of this activity is to help children verify the information they know (or think they know) and to get them thinking "beyond the box" about a particular subject.

Before reading the book, ask the children what they know about the subject. A list of suggested questions is below. The children should write down their "answers" (or adults for them if the children are not yet writing) on the chart found in Appendix A, index cards, or post-it notes.

Their answers should be placed on a "before reading" panel. If doing this as a group, you could use a bulletin board or even a blackboard. If doing this with individual children, you can use a plain manila folder with the front cover the "before reading" panel. Either way, you will need two more panels or sections—one called "correct answer" and the other "look for correct answer."



Do the children have any more questions about the subject ? If so, write them down to see if they are answered in the book.

After reading the book, go back to the questions and answers and determine whether the children's answers were correct or not.

If the answer was correct, move that card to the "correct answer" panel. If the answer was incorrect, go back to the book to find the correct information.

If the children have more questions that were not answered, they should look them up.

When an answer has been found and corrected, the card can be moved to the "correct answer" panel.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. What does an otter look like?
2. Do otters chew their food or gulp it?
3. Where do otters put their food?
4. How do otter moms keep their babies from drifting off while the mom is hunting for food?
5. What types of tools does an otter use?
6. What does an otter eat?
7. What kind of habitat do otters live in?

Comprehension Questions & Writing Prompts

1. What did Oliver do to act like an otter?
2. How did Oliver's parents react to his acting like an otter?
3. When did Oliver decide it was time to stop being an otter?
4. What is the one "otter thing" Oliver still wants to do?
5. What is your favorite animal? What would you do if you could be that animal for a day?

Observation Skills: Art Scavenger Hunt

Objective Core Language Arts Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).
Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.
Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).
Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.

What animal is on Mom's coffee mug?

What did Dad and Oliver drink with breakfast?

What does the otter hold on his chest?

What color is the string Oliver brings to the grocery store with his dad?

Does anyone in the family wear glasses?

What vegetables do Oliver and his family eat with dinner?

What stuffed animal did Oliver get at the aquarium?

Who carried Oliver when he fell asleep leaving the aquarium?

Language Arts: Sequence Sentence Strips

Cut into sentence strips, laminate if desired, and place in a "center." Have children put the events in order. Children may work alone or in small groups. Cards are in order but should be mixed up when cut apart.

Objective Core Language Arts:
Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.
Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

At breakfast, Oliver chewed his eggs and toast . . . . . . slowly, . . . carefully.
At lunch, Oliver took apart his bologna sandwich, lifted up his shirt, and slapped his bologna on his chest.
Later, Oliver went to the grocery store with his Dad.
At dinner, Oliver tried to slap his spaghetti on his bare stomach, but it was still hot
"I think my otter needs a bath right away," Mom said.

Oliver snuck a cookie into his armpit, slid off the chair, and wiggled up to the bath.

When Oliver raised his arms to wash his hair, his cookie fell into the water.

"Help me fish out the crumbs."

Oliver splashed around a bit. "I'm ready to get out."

"Is my otter all clean and dry?" Mom asked, helping Oliver with his pajamas.

Slowly . . .
carefully . . .
Oliver crawled into his mom's lap. *"THIS!"*

Word Search

Find the hidden words. Even non-reading children can match letters to letters to find the words! Easy—words go up to down or left to right (no diagonals). For older children, identify the coordinates of the first letter in each word (number, letter).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	O	B	A	Q	U	A	R	I	U	M
2	T	A	T	H	T	I	X	G	R	A
3	T	O	O	L	S	M	E	I	E	M
4	E	S	L	W	M	E	D	B	K	M
5	R	M	I	D	I	N	N	E	R	A
6	M	I	V	N	G	J	U	B	T	L
7	T	B	E	H	A	V	I	O	R	D
8	O	A	R	S	W	I	M	A	S	I
9	R	M	A	R	I	N	E	U	Q	V
10	P	O	R	F	A	M	I	L	Y	E

AQUARIUM

BEHAVIOR

FAMILY

MAMMAL

MARINE

OLIVER

OTTER

TOOLS

Classifying Animals

Objective: Classify organisms according to one selected feature, such as body covering, and identify other similarities shared by organisms within each group formed.

Describe several external features and behaviors of animals that can be used to classify them (e.g., size, color, shape of body parts).

Identify observable similarities and differences (e.g., number of legs, body coverings, size) between/among different groups of animals.

Just as we sort candy, scientists sort all living things into groups to help us understand and connect how things relate to each other. Scientists ask questions to help them sort or classify animals.

Based on the answers to the questions, scientists can sort the living organisms. The first sort is into a Kingdom. There are five commonly accepted Kingdoms: Monera, Protista, Fungi, Plantae, and Animalia. All of the living things in this book belong to Animalia or the Animal Kingdom.

The next big sort is into a Phylum. One of the first questions that a scientist will ask is whether the animal has (or had at some point in its life) a backbone. If the answer is "yes," the animal is a vertebrate. If the answer is "no," the animal is an invertebrate.

Each Phylum is broken down into Classes, like mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians, insects, or gastropods (snails). Then each class can be broken down even further into orders, families, genus and species, getting more specific.

The scientific name is generally in Latin or Greek and is the living thing's genus and species. People all over the world use the scientific names, no matter what language they speak. Most living organisms also have a common name that we use in our own language.

Some questions scientists ask:

- Does it have a backbone?
- What type of skin covering does it have?
- Does it have a skeleton? If so, is it inside or outside of the body?
- How many body parts does the animal have?
- Does it get oxygen from the air through lungs or from the water through gills?
- Are the babies born alive or do they hatch from eggs?
- Does the baby drink milk from its mother?
- Is it warm-blooded or cold-blooded?

Using what you know, and information and pictures in the book, see how many Animal Chart squares you can fill in for each animal.

Animal Chart

	Animals	Human	Otter
Appendages	legs (how many)		
	flippers/fins		
	wings		
	tail/no tail		
	horns/antlers		
Feet or hands: if they have; may have more than one	claws		
	web		
	toes		
	opposable thumbs/toes		
	hooves		
Movement: may do more than one	walks/runs		
	crawls		
	flies		
	slithers		
	swims		
	climbs		
	hops		
Backbone	backbone/vertebrate		
	no backbone/invertebrate		
Skeleton	inside skeleton (endoskeleton)		
	outside skeleton (exoskeleton)		
	no skeleton		
Body covering	hair/fur/whiskers/quills		
	feathers		
	dry scales or bony plates		
	moist scales		
	smooth, moist skin		
	hard outer shell		
	hard outer covering		
Color/patterns	stripes or spots		
	mostly one color		
	skin color changes		
	bright, vivid colors		
Gets oxygen	lungs		
	gills		
Body temperature	warm-blooded (endothermic)		
	cold-blooded (ectothermic)		
Babies	born alive		
	hatch from eggs		
	born alive or hatch from eggs		
Metamorphosis	complete		
	incomplete		
	none		
Teeth	sharp		
	flat		
	no teeth (bill/beak)		
Food	plant eater (herbivore)		
	meat eater (carnivore)		
	both (omnivore)		

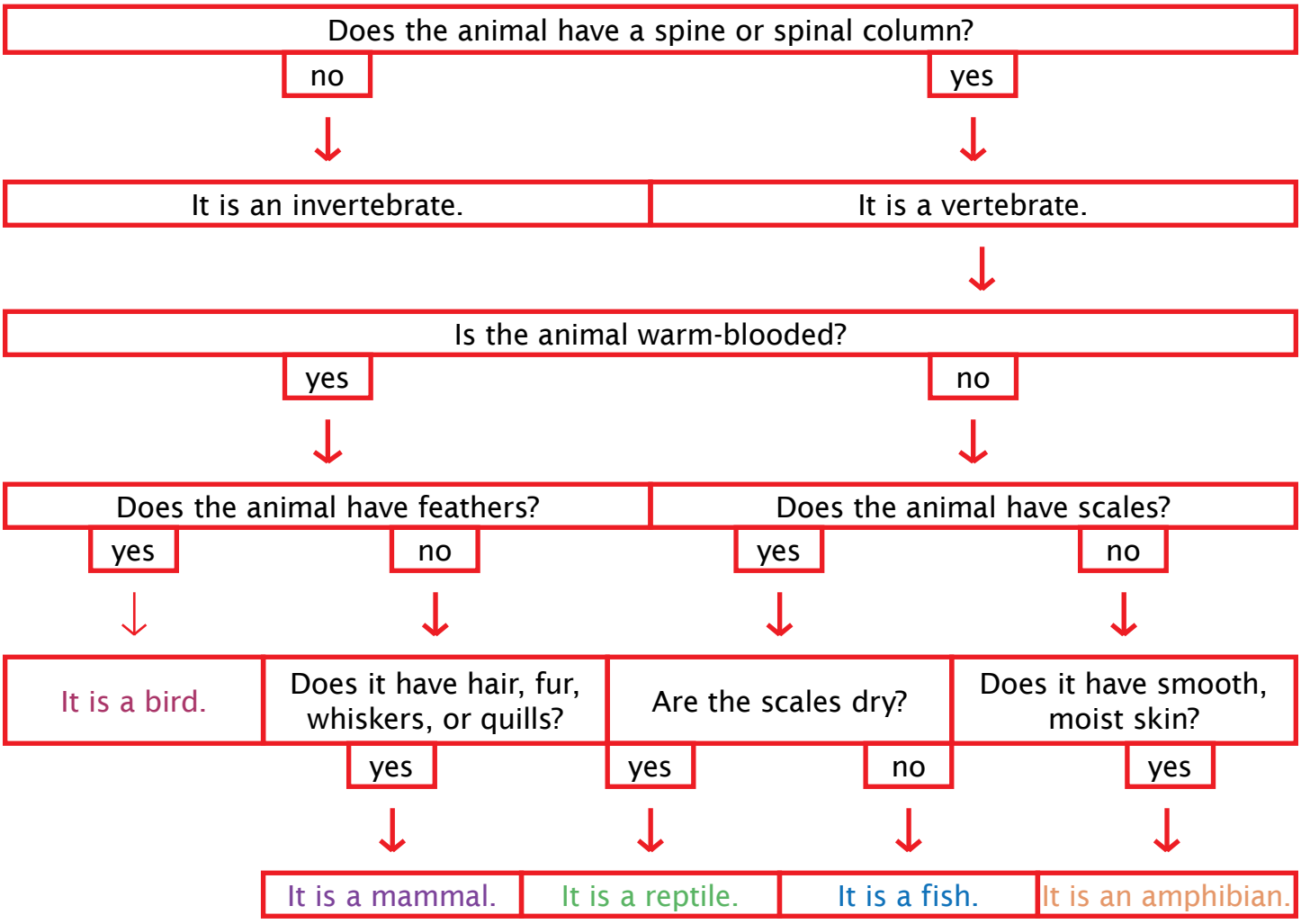
Dichotomous (Yes/No) Key

A dichotomous key helps to sort (classify) animals. These keys work by asking yes or no questions. Each answer leads to another yes or no question, until the animal class is identified. There are five classes of animals with backbones (vertebrates): fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Use the information found in the book to match the animal to its classification.

Objective: Classify organisms according to one selected feature, such as body covering, and identify other similarities shared by organisms within each group formed.

Describe several external features and behaviors of animals that can be used to classify them (e.g., size, color, shape of body parts).

Identify observable similarities and differences (e.g., number of legs, body coverings, size) between/among different groups of animals.



Compare/Contrast: Animal and Human Senses

Objective Core Language Literature 4: Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

Students know that senses can provide essential information (regarding danger, food, mates, etc.) to animals about their environment.

Identify the five senses and their related body parts: sight – eyes, hearing – ears, smell – nose, taste – tongue, touch – skin,

Identify the structures of living organisms and explain their function.

Compare and contrast otter and human body parts used for senses.

to smell	to feel
to hear	to see

otter	
my definition	my drawing

behavior	
my definition	my drawing

float	
my definition	my drawing

groom	
my definition	my drawing

Math Cards

Objective Core Mathematics Classify objects into given categories; count the numbers of objects in each category and sort the categories by count. (up to 10)
Solve addition and subtraction word problems, and add and subtract within 10, e.g., by using objects or drawings to represent the problem.
Use numbers, up to 10, to place objects in order, such as first, second, and third, and to name them
For any number from 1 to 9, find the number that makes 10 when added to the given number, e.g., by using objects or drawings, and record the answer with a drawing or equation.

Math Card Games

(Make four copies of the math cards to play these games):

Tens Make Friends Memory Game is a combination of a memory and adding game.

- Play like the memory game, above.
- If the animal numbers add up to 10, the child keeps the pair and takes another turn.
- If they do not add up to ten, the player should turn the cards back over and it is another player's turn.

Go Fish for Fact Families is a twist on "Go Fish."

- Shuffle cards and deal five cards to each player. Put the remaining cards face down in a draw pile.
- If the player has three cards that make a fact family, he/she places them on the table and recites the four facts related to the family. For example, if someone has a 2, 3, and 5, the facts are: 2 + 3 = 5, 3 + 2 = 5, 5 – 2 = 3, 5 – 3 = 2.
- The player then asks another player for a specific card rank. For example: "Sue, please give me a 6."
- If the other player has the requested card, she must give the person her card.
- If the person asked doesn't have that card, he/she says, "Go fish."
- The player then draws the top card from the draw pile.
- If he/she happens to draw the requested card, he/she shows it to the other players and can put the fact family on the table. Otherwise, play goes to the next person.
- Play continues until either someone has no cards left in his/her hand or the draw pile runs out. The winner is the player who then has the most sets of fact families.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

Art Sequencing

Cut out the photos, laminate if desired, and place in a “center.” Have children put the events in order. Children may work alone or in small groups. Cards are in order but should be mixed up when cut apart.

Answers

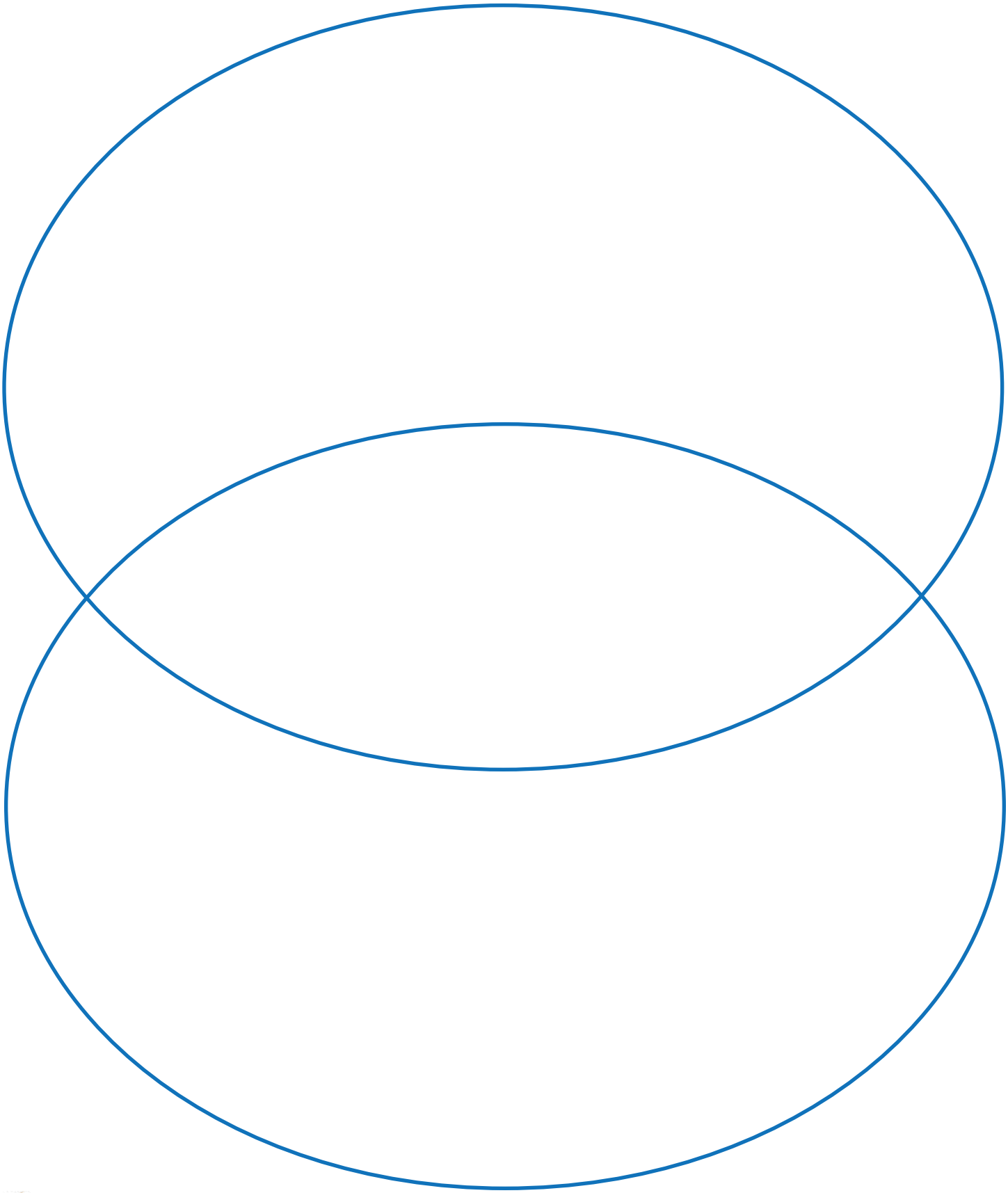
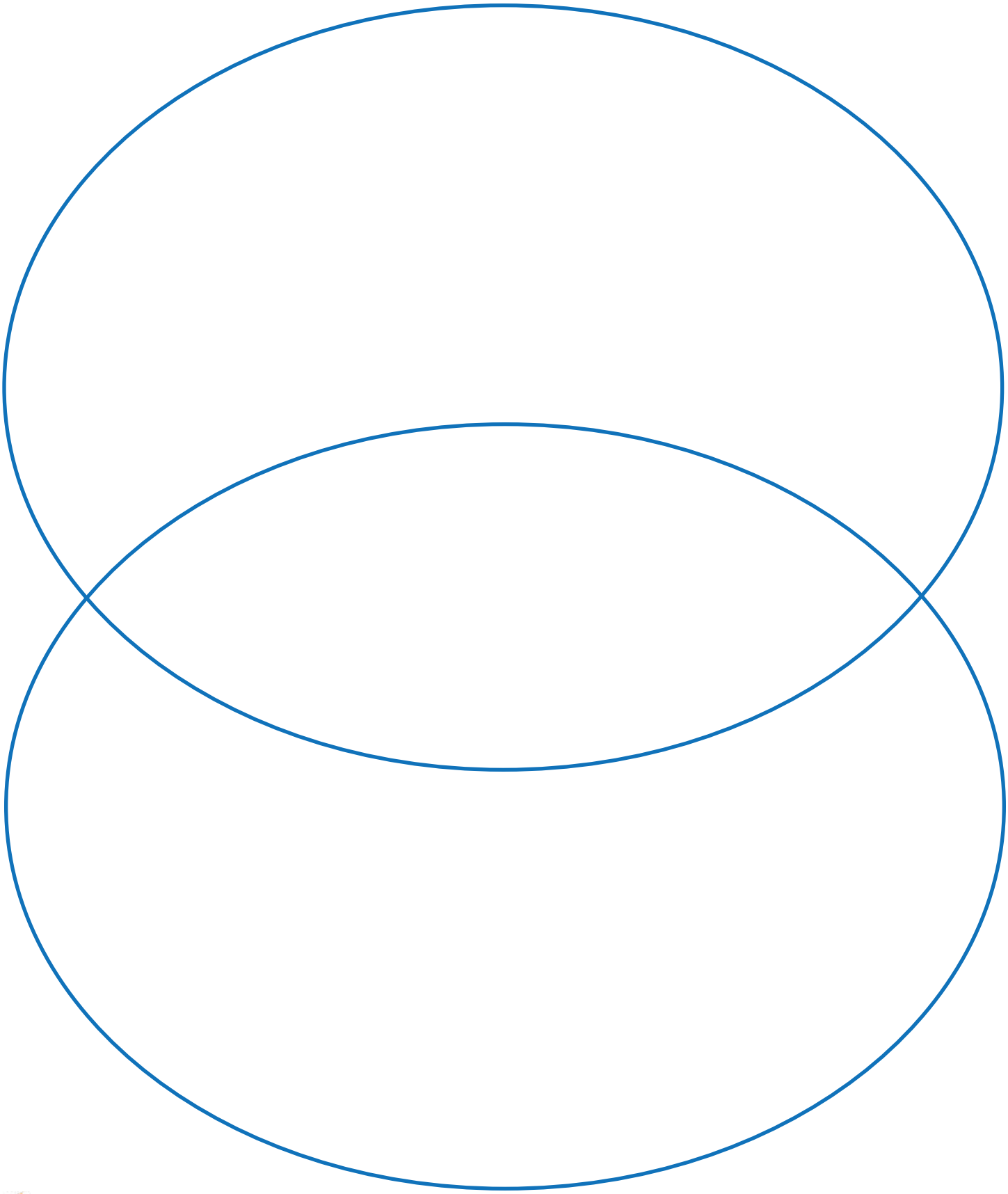
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	O		A	Q	U	A	R	I	U	M
2	T									A
3	T	O	O	L	S					M
4	E		L							M
5	R		I							A
6			V							L
7		B	E	H	A	V	I	O	R	
8			R							
9		M	A	R	I	N	E			
10				F	A	M	I	L	Y	

Appendix A—"What Children Know" Cards

Question: My answer: This information is correct! This information is not correct; can you find the correct information?	Question: My answer: This information is correct! This information is not correct; can you find the correct information?
Question: My answer: This information is correct! This information is not correct; can you find the correct information?	Question: My answer: This information is correct! This information is not correct; can you find the correct information?

Appendix B—Venn Diagram

Compare and contrast humans and sea otters.



Compare and contrast river otters and sea otters