



Food Chain Game

Instructions



The Food Chain Game is a great activity for the whole class to get thinking about competition, population dynamics, or habitat. This game can be simple or it can be extended to incorporate and demonstrate more complex issues. The important thing is that the children lead the learning by discussing and acting out ideas as they are raised.

To begin, establish a woodland area, (in the school hall, playground or woodland). and spread out tokens (or objects to represent food). Give children a role, red or grey squirrel, predator, land manager, builder, or even eco warrior! Some sort of tag, sticker or costume will be needed to show who's who. Always begin with a few reds, each having their own drey (maybe a bean bag, to act as a collection point). Below are a few examples of how the game might play out...

To explore competition, begin with some red squirrels collecting fungi and fruit in a deciduous woodland. When they collect enough they can have young (introduce more reds), a successful year. Next season, introduce greys, they eat more, ask the children how to show this (maybe collect 2 tokens at a time), discuss what happens. Next season, the reds may move to a new woodland, introduce conifers, now the reds have an advantage, they can climb the thin conifer branches more easily (we made grey squirrels hop for this environment). Reds can also get the nutrients they need from tiny conifer seeds more easily than greys, predict what will happen, act out a season and then discuss. Next season a grey is carrying squirrel pox virus, reds may be infected and then die. To show this in the game, greys could take the sticker off any reds they come into contact with, discuss predictions. As reds can't fight back, soon enough the population becomes extinct. Does that happen in your population? If not, why not?

To extend learning around population dynamics, predators can be introduced. As reds are more able climbers than greys this may give them an advantage, particularly in a coniferous woodland where the majority of the food is high in the canopy. As above, start simple and introduce new elements with discussion as ideas flow.

To extend learning around habitat, you can choose the tokens used, Reds will do better in a coniferous woodland. You can also introduce threats from man... is the timber in the woodland valuable... does a supermarket want to buy the land... is the land protected for nature? Where ever this game takes you, remember to have fun!