

Ten steps for conducting an effective programme with ZOO's Amphibian Ark (AArk) packets

Greetings! Welcome to the Amphibian Ark, India Campaign. If you have received this communication, you must have requested some AArk educational packets and possibly t-shirts for your education programme.

You may or may not have been informed that these packets are meant to be used to conduct a meaningful and memorable educational experience, and not to be simply handed out after your class or function. Since we know you are very busy and might not have had time to plan, here are 10 Steps to an effective programme. You can just take these one by one and do exactly what it says.

1. Tell your class or group that they are about to learn some important information about one of the world's most important groups of animals ... amphibians.
2. Hand out the packets "Frogs Matter" and tell them you will be taking them through exercises using each item. There are 6 items: a booklet, a rakhi, a sticker, a mask, a puzzle and (possibly) a t-shirt.
3. Start your programme by asking participants to find the frog rakhi in their packet. Conduct a small ceremony with each child tying the rakhi on the wrist of another, maybe their seatmate. Tell them that this rakhi symbolizes their commitment to plants and animals particularly amphibians.
4. Next, ask them to remove the booklet called FROGS MATTER ... to India. Hopefully you would have read it yourself and picked out some things which you think are important. If not, listed below are 5 facts that youngsters need to know about amphibians. Any of the pages of the booklet could make a good sub-theme in your programme. There are more details which are enough to get you started educating about amphibians.

i) Amphibians and frogs are the same animal. There are other amphibians by other names that look and act different from frogs. Toads, salamander, newts, caecilians, and frogs are all amphibians.

ii) Amphibians help keep forests and ecosystems healthy. If we lost them, life would be harder.

iii) Amphibians are in danger of being lost ... habitat destruction & fragmentation, pollution & pesticides, alien species, climate change, over collection, as well as disease -- one disease in particular has killed many amphibians in the world, a fungus called chytrid (kai-trid)

iv) Frogs have lived on Earth for more than 36 crore years but NOW up to half of all amphibians could disappear in our lifetime.

v) We should know about this and some ways to help. We need to make sure our parents, teachers, friends, foresters, and governors know it. India should not lose a single species ... it is our duty to protect animals and plants ... for our future as well as theirs.

5. Ask participants some questions about what you have told them. This will stimulate their thinking and make them active. Some questions might be the following. You need to correct them if they get it wrong, of course.

Number i) of the five facts

Q. How many major groups of amphibians are there ?

A. 3 groups

Q. What are they?

A. Frogs, toads, salamanders, caecilians (pronounced suh-sill-ee-an)

Q. How are they different from one another ?

A. Frogs live more in water than land; toads live more on land than water; salamanders look like lizards; caecilians look like big worms.

Number ii) of the five facts

Q. How are amphibians useful ?

A. They keep the forests healthy.

A. They provide food for fish, crocodilians, turtles, birds, etc.

A. They are useful in medical research for heart ailments and cancer.

A. They are first animals affected by trouble in the forest and warn us.

A. They are an huge family 6000 species each holding unique DNA

A. They make comforting and pleasant sounds at night.

A. They are our cultures ... many fables and stories are about frogs.

A. They are considered lucky in most countries.

A. They are innocent ambassadors of the forest.

Number iii) of the five facts

Q. Why are amphibians in danger of being lost

A. habitat loss, loss of forest cover, forests being divided

A. climate change drought, higher temperatures

A. diseases

A. overcollection for food or research or for pets

Number iv) of the five facts

Q. How long have amphibians lived on earth

A. over 36 crore years !

Q. Are they safe now ?

A. No! half of them are likely to go extinct in our lifetime.

Q. What other old animals have disappeared ?

A. Dinosaurs.

Number v) of the five facts

Q. Why should we care?

A. We & our family will feel their disappearance ...not in a good way !

A. They help us so we should help them.

A. It is our world.

A. It is our duty.

A. They have the right to live.

6. Now it is time for an action that is more physical. Ask participants to take out their masks and placards from the packet. They should put on the mask and hold up the placard by the small stick. You can think of something for them to do while "dressed up" or you can select one of these :

- a. They can pose for a photograph. The press loves it when there are such photogenic events.
- b. They “demonstrate for amphibians”.
 - i. They could march single file, or two by two, outside their class, venue area, etc. into a more public area.
 - ii. They could make noises like amphibians. Try “rivet, rivet, rivet, rivet, rivet” over and over in a low tone.
 - iii. They could sing a song or chant a poem ...
 Frogs are good ! Toads often live under wood.
 Salamanders have another trait.
 Caecilians make great bait.
- Or
 A frog was late
 For a date
 With a toad
 The salamander
 Ate his mate
 As caecilians wait.
- Or
 Aid amphibians. Help frogs with Amphibian Ark.
- c. They can march around the venue or down the street in their t-shirts and masks.
- d. If you are really bold, you could take them to see the environment minister or Chief Wildlife Warden.

7. Since participants are “dressed up” now might be a good time for a drama. You can divide the group into two or three smaller groups and have each of them plan a short drama using their masks. Here are some plots and themes.

a. The politics of amphibians: Roles played by humans don't need masks. The amphibians, wearing their masks and carrying their placards, march on the government secretariat making frog sounds (rivet, rivet, rivet). They give a representation to the politician and the forest officer that they need more forest, better quality forest and unfragmented forest in order to survive. Let participants add creative components but if they convey

wrong facts, be sure and correct them.

b. The dangers of school: Characters may be school leader and students.

Frogs have been captured and brought to the school for use in teaching anatomy. They are to be killed and dissected. The frogs protest their fate, stating to the teacher and student that there are now many kinds of ways to learn anatomy without killing -- models are available and computer programmes. The frogs explain that their race is under so many pressures for which there are not ready solutions. At least where there are solutions such as the computer programme, they should not be killed or tortured.

c. The trade of amphibians: Characters are a poacher and a policeman and of course the frogs.

A trapper has caught many frogs to be sold for frog legs or for biology lessons. The frogs are frightened and angry ... they make so much noise that it attracts a policeman who arrests the poacher and releases the frogs.

For facts to use in their dramas or to make up dramas of their own, they can refer to

pages 6-7 in the booklet for full reasons why frogs are useful;

pp. 8-9 for other reasons why we need to try and save them;

pp. 11-12 for facts about the numbers and potential safety (or lack of) of Indian amphibians;

pp. 13 & 15 for what they (the participants can do)

pp. 14 for what scientist, zoos and other breeding facilities are doing.

8. If you want to extend your amphibian programme or add to the variety, here are some ideas :

a. You can give out blank sheets of paper and have a drawing assignment using the drawings inside the booklet

as models. You can ask participants to put their drawings up on the wall and make a story out of the collection.

b. You can have a drawing competition asking participants to illustrate particular themes ... such as the problems of amphibians in forests, or the utility of amphibians, etc.

c. You can have an essay competition asking participants to use only the reference material in their book and tell why we should support the Amphibian campaign, etc.

d. You can ask participants to study the booklet and then have a debate competition with one side promoting amphibian conservation and the other side promoting commercialization of amphibians.

e. For these competitions you can use the t-shirts as prizes.

f. If you have sufficient t-shirts you can use them in your demonstration.

9. Signature campaign. We are sending copies of a signature form and a request that you get all participants to sign. If they are interested in collecting signatures for the global campaign themselves, we would be happy to send them forms to use in their neighborhood or school. We are trying to collect 2 million signatures.

10. Closing your programme. Be sure and end your programme on a dramatic note, urging participants to tell others about the amphibian crisis and India campaign. Ask them to make a pledge and a commitment to tell 5 other people about the campaign.