

## Activity overview

Carefully observing animals is an inquiry-based activity that can be done anywhere, at the Louisville Zoo, your school, or your backyard! This activity asks students to select one meerkat and record its behavior over a set period of time. Scientists use ethograms to help them regularly collect this data.

## Materials

- Copy of ethogram data and ethogram observations for each student
- Stopwatch or timer
- Pencils and coloring tools
- Meerkat live streaming video (insert)

## Instructions

1. Explain to students that they will be animal behavior scientists in this activity.
2. Students will be observing the live stream from our meerkat habitat. Ask student to choose one meerkat to observe. More than one student can observe the same meerkat.
3. Provide each student with a copy of the data sheets. The first page asks students to identify the weather for the day and includes the "Meerkat Behavior Bank." This bank explains the possible behaviors students will see and matching icons for each behavior.
4. The ethogram shows six total observation rows. The teacher will serve as the timekeeper. Recommended: Three minutes of observation with every 30 seconds counting as one observation.
5. Announce every observation interval so the students can record what they see on the ethogram sheet. Students should only record what they see at the exact interval, only what the meerkat is doing right at that moment.
6. After observation, the provided extension questions can be used for further exploration. Students may want to create graphs or tables to display their data.

# MEERKAT BEHAVIOR ETHOGRAM: OBSERVATION SHEET

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**Today's weather is:**  
(Circle or color your choice)

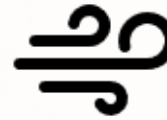
Sunny

Cloudy

Rainy

Windy

Snowy



## Meerkat Behavior Bank











































<b>SENTRY</b>	Meerkat stands upright on hind legs, alert, looking at surroundings.	
<b>FORAGE</b>	Meerkat consumes or manipulates food or enrichment.	
<b>LOCOMOTE</b>	Meerkat runs, walks, or climbs around exhibit.	
<b>REST</b>	Meerkat sits or lies immobile, eyes open or closed.	
<b>PLAY</b>	Meerkat engages in social interaction or chasing.	
<b>GROOM</b>	Meerkat uses its teeth or front paws to comb through animal meerkat's fur.	
<b>OTHER</b>	Meerkat is doing any other behavior not listed.	

# MEERKAT BEHAVIOR ETHOGRAM: DATA SHEET

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Choose one (1) meerkat to observe. Your teacher will keep track of time and let you know when to mark your paper.

Observation	What is your meerkat doing?
1.	      
2.	      
3.	      
4.	      
5.	      
6.	      

# MEERKAT BEHAVIOR ETHOGRAM: EXTENSION QUESTIONS

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Think about your meerkat's behavior, look back at your observations to help you answer the questions.

1. What behavior did your meerkat display the most?

2. What items did you see in the meerkat's habitat?

3. Did you observe anything that surprised you?

4. What else would you like to learn about meerkats?

Draw a picture of the meerkat or the meerkat's exhibit.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick black border, intended for the student to draw a picture of a meerkat or its exhibit.