

A Beak for Every Job



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EDUCATION

Students will study and make predictions about the function of different bird beaks.

📋 At least three different “beaks” such as chopsticks, kitchen tongs, wrench, tweezers, spoons, clothespins. At least three different “foods” such as nuts, dried berries, pasta, marbles, building blocks. One cup or bowl per beak type. Timer (optional)

👤 Grades: K-7 ⌚ 15-30 minutes 📄 Activity sheet included

Introduction

There are more than 10,000 species of birds in the world! Surely some would go hungry if they all tried to eat the same food? Different birds eat different things, including insects, grains, seeds, nectar, fruit, insects and fish. To figure out what a bird eats, look at its beak. Birds have adapted their beak shapes to match the food they prefer.

In this game, players act out different beaks to see which beaks are built for which foods.



GENERALIST



INSECT CATCHING



GRAIN EATING



CONIFEROUS-SEED EATING



SCYTHING



FRUIT EATING



CHISELING



DIP NETTING



SURFACE SKIMMING



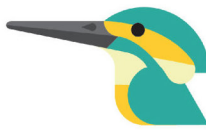
NECTAR FEEDING



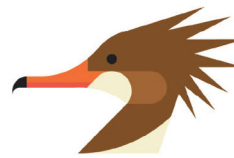
RAPTORIAL



FILTER FEEDING



AERIAL FISHING



PURSUIT FISHING



SCAVENGING

The dizzying diversity of beak shapes is largely a reflection of the foods the birds eat. These are just a few representative examples from around the world. Photo from The Audubon Society, Illustration: Tyler Lang

Directions

K-3: Beak Tester

- Make a prediction about which tools will work best for which food. Write your answers on the next page.
- Put all food in a pile in the middle.
- Set out a cup or bowl for each beak type you will be using.
- Choose a beak type to test out. Try picking up different types of foods. Put all the items in the cup or bowl assigned to that beak.
- Try again and again until you have tested each beak type.
- Fill out the chart found on the next page. Which beaks pick up which foods best? Why do you think that is? Did your prediction come true?



Grade 4-7: Hungry Hungry Birds

- Gather your family members to play against you.
- Make a prediction about which tools will work best for which food. Write your answers on the next page.
- Put all the food in a pile in the middle, and sit around it.
- Give each player a different beak type and a cup or bowl.
- Set your timer to one minute (optional).
- It's a race! Race against the other players to get as much food as you can before the timer runs out.
- Fill out the observation chart, using the example below. Did everyone try for the same food? Was your prediction correct? Which foods are easiest to pick up with which beaks?

Extension

Check out [this slideshow](#) from Audobon showcasing the beaks of some of our feathered friends.

Food Type	Best Beak Prediction	Beak Types		
		Wrench	Spoon	Tweezers
Almonds	Spoon	Hard	Tricky	Hard
Macaroni	Tweezers	Hard	Easy	Hard
Dried blueberries	Wrench	Easiest	Easy	Easy

Food Type	Best Beak Prediction	Beak Types					
		Wrench	Spoon				



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