

Animal Training

Behaviours can be shaped through training – why is it beneficial for zoo animals?

Animal Care

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of the session:

- ✓ All students will understand how animal training is used in zoos and how it benefits animal management.
- ✓ Most students will understand the basics of training and recognise how to adapt these methods to accommodate for different species.
- ✓ Some students will understand the different forms of learning and how this can impact training and their overall husbandry.

Session Outline:

The session starts with a definition of behaviour and lists the basic animal behaviours necessary for survival. The session then goes on to explain the two types of behaviour. This includes a discussion of innate behaviour and imprinting before moving on to learned behaviours. This will cover habituation, social learning, imitation, tutoring, trial and error and conditioning. A brief history of training is covered before delving into the aspects of training which include operant and classical conditioning. Students will get the chance to train each other using techniques discussed. More specific considerations for training are also covered including cues, bridges and positive reinforcement. The second half of the session will involve a tour into the zoo where students will be able to witness real-world training examples and have the opportunity to ask questions to the qualified keepers.



Key Points Covered

- Classical conditioning
- Operant conditioning
- Positive reinforcement
- Steps of training
- Reasons for training
- Practicalities of training