

Small World Creative Learning

Hedgehogs and Hibernation

Suitable for ages 5-10



In this workshop we're going to do a bit of learning about hedgehogs and hibernation, and then we're going use what we've learned to get creative.

We're going to learn:

What hibernation is
How and why hedgehogs hibernate

We're going to make:

A 3D stop motion animation using a pinecone hedgehog!



What is hibernation?

Here where I live in the UK ([link](#)) the winter is coming to an end (it's March right now) and we're getting into spring. I love this time of year when everything starts coming back to life - flowers begin to bloom, buds are opening on trees and bushes, the days are a bit longer and brighter, and it is a little bit warmer!

And it's also the time when hedgehogs come out of hibernation! I'm very lucky because I live near the countryside and I get hedgehogs in my garden. In fact, I think at least one of them hibernated in my leaf/stick heap after I cut my hedge last year.

So, hibernation is when a creature goes to sleep for long spells during the winter months - in the UK that's November, December, January, February and March.

But it depends on the weather, too. If November isn't very cold then animals will wait a few weeks till they hibernate, and if March is warmer than usual they might start to appear then.

To me, the idea of sleeping through the cold winter months sounds like a pretty good idea, but why do animals do it, and how do they keep from starving and getting cold while they're asleep?

Why hedgehogs hibernate

The main reason they hibernate is because there's not enough food around for them in the winter. Hedgehogs eat things like woodlice and snails, and during the winter these creatures are not so easy to find. In fact, snails, like hedgehogs, hibernate! Check this link: [Snails and hibernation](#)



How do hedgehogs hibernate?

Before they start their long winter sleep, hedgehogs start to put on weight to make sure they have a big layer of fat on their bodies to keep them warm and to give them a food supply *in their body* so they don't have to wake up to go and find food.

When the hedgehog is ready to hibernate, it finds a safe spot and pulls together a pile of leaves and twigs to go to sleep under, or maybe it will be lucky enough to find a little hedgehog house some people put in their gardens (see the picture below). Whether it's a pile of leaves or a little house, the hedgehog's winter home is called a HIBERNACULUM - what a posh name for a hedgehog house! You say it like this: "hi-ber-NA-kew-lum"

Once it goes into hibernation mode and falls asleep in its hibernaculum, the hedgehog's body starts to slow everything down so it doesn't waste its energy and body fat. It even stops weeing and pooing during this time, though it might get up occasionally if it really needs to go.

Sometimes it stays asleep for months, but sometimes if it's not too cold, it might wake up and have a bit of a mooch around, find some food, and then go back to sleep again until the weather gets warmer in the spring.



This is a nighttime picture of a hedgehog getting ready to hibernate. You can see the film of it by clicking on the link below [A hedgehog makes its hibernaculum](#)

And here are some more links if you want to find out more about hedgehogs and hibernation, and hedgehogs in general:

[The Woodland Trust](#)

[Hedgehog Street](#)

Now to get creative and make a hedgehog animation!

Never made an animation before? [Here's a link to a very simple one I made with a cone hedgehog.](#)

You can make a model hedgehog using a cone like I have, or you can make one in air-drying clay or modelling dough, it's up to you! Googly eyes are optional - make your own with card if you prefer :) [Click here to go to my 3D Stop Motion Animation Workshop](#) where you will find all the information you need to make your own stop motion hedgehog animation.



So long as you have access to a smart phone or tablet, there are no extra costs - the animation app is FREE!

I hope you've enjoyed finding out a bit about hedgehogs and hibernation. Get in touch via the Contact page with your comments and links to your hedgehog animations. Have fun!

Finally, if you don't have the time or stuff ready to make the animation here is some hedgehog art inspiration for pictures and stories you can create yourself.

This beautiful picture is by Brian Wildsmith, an amazing British illustrator



And here are a couple by me from a story I made up about a toy hedgehog finding its way home for Christmas.



For more inspiration to help you make your hedgehog pictures and stories [click here for a lovely little film of a hedgehog and her hoglets.](#)

Take Care, Have Fun and Make Stuff!!