

What Big Teeth You Have!

Help students see that the ways animals use their teeth are different from the ways people do. Review what people use their teeth for. (*primarily for breaking down food into smaller pieces*) Explain that animals use their teeth as tools, for defense and protection, and to capture their prey.

To help students understand these concepts, label three charts with “Tools,” “Defense and Protection,” and “Capture Their Prey.” Write these sentences on sentence strips:

A walrus uses its tusks to pull its large body out of water.

Dogs will bite if provoked.

Some cats use their teeth to carry their young from place to place.

Some snakes use their hollow fangs to inject poison.

Some rodents use their teeth to crack open shells.

Some bats use their sharp teeth to pierce insect bodies.

Some rabbits use their teeth to gnaw roots.

An elephant uses its tusks to kill a lion that is attacking its young.

Beavers use their teeth to make homes for themselves.

Alligators use their pointed front teeth for catching fish, snakes, turtles, small mammals, and birds.

Hang the charts on a bulletin board. Read one of the sentence strips and ask students if it is an example of an animal using its teeth as a tool, for defense and protection, or to capture its prey. Tack the sentence strips on the appropriate chart. To extend the activity, challenge students to look for further examples of the ways animals use their teeth as you read informational books about animals. When they discover one, have them write it on a sentence strip and add it to the appropriate chart.

Computer Connection

February is National Pet Dental Health Month. For information and resources, see American Veterinary Medical Foundation for informative articles, podcasts, and a quiz on pet dental care.