



Chimpanzee Acting 101

Overview: Visitors look at drawings of chimpanzee facial expressions and listen to chimpanzee vocalizations, then learn to mimic them.

Objective: Visitors learn to identify modes of animal communication using chimpanzees as examples. Both facial expressions and vocalizations will be explored and identified. Visitors will draw comparisons between human and chimpanzee expressions.

Related Exhibits:
Changing Faces

Format Options:
Table top walk-up
Make and Take
Content for class

Age Appropriateness: Families; Grades Pre-K and up.

Staffing Prerequisites: 1 person; if sounds are eliminated, may be unstaffed with a little monitoring to keep an eye on supplies and to control mess.

Vocabulary:
Chimpanzee vocalization definitions:

Pant-hoot: a chimpanzee call with an introduction, build-up, climax, and let-down. The pant-hoot is a loud call; observers routinely hear chimpanzee pant-hoot over a mile away in dense forest. High-ranking adult males pant-hoot most frequently. Females sometimes produce pant-hoots on their own and often join in a chorus of pant-hoots when others are calling. Chimps pant-hoot in a variety of circumstances, such as arriving at fruit trees, responding to distant pant-hoots, when joining other community members, and when traveling.

Pant-grunt: a submissive sound made when approaching or being approached by a higher ranking individual. This sound is made by chimps that are socially apprehensive, or even fearful.

Pant-bark: a more intense version of the pant-grunt. This sound is made as a chimp's fear or apprehension intensifies in a social situation with a higher ranking individual.

Whimper: a short, bark-like whimper made when a chimp is in distress. Young chimpanzees may whimper when nervous or separated from their mother. The whimper is the call most people associate with chimpanzees, since most of the chimpanzees we see on television or in the movies are nervous juveniles.

Scream: made when angry or scared. Like humans, chimpanzees scream when they are being chased, beaten, or otherwise attacked or threatened.

Hoo: similar to a whimper. This vocalization is often given either by juveniles or their mothers to maintain contact during travel.

Materials Provided:

1. CD of chimpanzee vocalizations
2. Originals of chimpanzee facial expression sheets, one set labeled for masks and one set unlabeled for activity use (fresh copies may be downloaded from www.discoverchimpanzees.org/activities/ident-a-chimp-expressions.php)

Additional Materials Needed:

1. Copies of chimpanzee facial expressions (cardstock works best)
2. Large craft sticks
3. Masking tape
4. Markers or crayons
5. Scissors
6. A CD player

Demonstration Notes:

Chimpanzees are very social animals and use many different ways to communicate with other members of their group. Chimps employ facial expressions, vocalizations, body language, grooming, and even kisses and affectionate pats to tell other chimps how they are feeling.

Chimps can use their facial expressions to show their emotions, just like humans. We have pictures of five different chimp expressions: excitement, fear, playful, aggressive, and pouting.

Chimpanzees have a wide variety of vocalizations. Each chimp has their own distinct and expressive voice, and they can communicate many different emotions with their "words."

Captive chimpanzees have been taught to communicate in a variety of additional ways, including the use of sign language.

To Do:

1. Invite visitors to examine the unlabeled chimpanzee facial expressions. What do they think each face means? How do the faces compare to human expressions?

2. Identify each expression, and then allow visitors to choose their favorite chimp expression to make into a mask.
3. Color, cut out, and secure a stick with tape to the back of the mask.
4. Play the chimp vocalizations. What do you think each sound means? Can you mimic each sound?
5. Try to match the sounds to the facial expressions. How do these sounds compare to other animal sounds? How do they compare to human noises? What sound matches your mask?
Excitement = pant-hoot
Fear = pant-grunt, pant-bark, whimper, or scream

Extension:

Organize a trip to a local zoo to observe primates interacting with one another. If this is not possible, show video of primates interacting in the wild. Analyze the modes of communication. How are they like human interactions? How do they differ?

