

Birds of a Feather

Bird Beak Challenge



Bird beaks are highly specialized for the different foods that the birds eat. Some beaks are great for pecking at seeds or cracking open nuts, while others can scoop up fish easily or grasp prey tightly. In this Bird Beak Challenge, you will use a variety of materials to discover just how important the right beak is for a bird to eat their food sources!

Materials:

- ✦ You'll need an assortment of tools that will represent the different types of **beaks**.
 - Spoons, tweezers, straws, scissors, large binder clips
- ✦ Objects that will represent the different types of **food** items for birds
 - Small cup of water, paper clips, rubber bands, toothpicks, dried macaroni
- ✦ Empty cups that will represent the bird's **stomach**
- ✦ Trays or empty cardboard box lids to hold the bird food

Directions:

1. Place each "food item" in its own tray on different tables. These will be separate stations for the "birds" to visit.
2. Pass out the tools so everyone gets just one, along with an empty cup.
 - You are now a very hungry bird! Your cup is your stomach, and must be kept upright and close to your body. The tool is your beak, and the only way you can pick up your food. Food is only eaten if it makes it into your cup by your beak.
3. Make a prediction! Before we begin, write down on the back of this paper which beak you think will be best for each food source and why.
4. Then rotate through each tray station, trying to pick up as many of each food item and putting them into your cup. Time it for 20 seconds at each station. You can record how much of the food you "ate" on the back of this page. Empty your cup back into each tray before moving on to the next tray.
5. Once you have done all the stations with one tool, switch beaks with another bird and attempt to pick up your food with your new beak!

Discussion:

- Which tool worked best for the different food items? Was it what you predicted?
- If you did this again, would you change how you used the tool/beak?
- Can you think of any birds that have beaks similar to the tools we used?
- What do you think each of these food items represent for real birds? (For example, a rubber band is like a worm?)
- What would happen if all the bird types in this activity flew to an island where no birds had been before, and the only food available was the dried macaroni? Which birds would be most/least successful at feeding? If you came back to the island in 50 years, what would you expect to see?

