

We need to encourage students to experiment with language so they become comfortable and confident using English in all its forms as often as possible. Most new arrivals in Australia want to see kangaroos and touch a koala. This unit of work harnesses their interest in animals and explores the smorgasbord of language opportunities that this topic provides. From simple exercises naming the animals, to developing vocabulary and pronunciation skills in areas including naming colours, movement verbs, life cycles of different animals, habitat and food requirements, parts of the body, predators, threats to their survival and environmental issues - the topic Australian Animals allows students to interact and learn in a myriad of learning situations both in and out of the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

When new migrants or tourists arrive in Australia they sometimes have a 'wish list' of things they want to see and do in Australia. This agenda usually includes seeing the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge, going to Uluru, swimming on the Great Barrier Reef, feeding a kangaroo and being able to cuddle a koala.

Lessons based on Australia's native animals can boost their enthusiasm, knowledge of Australia and improve their English. Depending on their level of English, this could last as short as a few lessons or as long as a few weeks. Such a course should broaden and improve their vocabulary, speaking, listening, writing, reading skills and further develop their understanding of English, all based on Australian animals.

As a tutor, plan your course so that enthusiasm is maintained and student's interest is held. You can include all sorts of English challenges, including vocabulary development through quizzes, reading development through cloze exercises, speaking skills improvement through role plays and discussions.

First build on what they know.

1. Brainstorm Australian animals

How many Australian animals and birds can they name?

This work and their discussion may indicate a few pronunciation problems which can be dealt with later through pronunciation practice sessions.

2. Pronunciation

Bring out lots of pictures. Collect some resource books from the library of Australian wildlife. Students can name the animals and birds they recognise. For lower level classes a pronunciation exercise is useful for students to repeat the animals' names.

Tongue Twisters are great for pronunciation, stress, fluency, intonation and fun, they could repeat after you:

Kangaroo
Cockatoo
Wallaroo
Didgeridoo
How do you do?
I've lost my shoe!
What can I do?

3. Questions?

Question formation is important and what better way to initiate this than with an animal-based activity.

'What's its name? Where does it live? What does it eat? How big does it grow? How does it move?'

Newspaper or magazine articles about animal issues for reading/ conversation can occur. Such articles are informative, topical, stimulating and sometimes controversial. Culling koalas and eating kangaroos are strong topics at a slightly higher level.

4. Who am I?

Play a 'Who am I?' game, where students guess an animal's name use a picture or word and they have to ask the questions so that the answer is 'Yes' or 'No'. From these answers they discover what sort of animal you are. This is good fun and involves an amazing amount of speaking practice. 'Platypus males have a poisonous spur on their hind legs. What other animals are poisonous?'

5. Colours and patterns

Colours and patterns can easily be taught using the animal and bird theme. Australian animals are so vibrant and different from those in the students' own countries, that there is a lot they want to discover about them. What colour is their beak/ nose/ fur/ feather/ ears? Are they all the same colour or do the colours change? Why do they change? Do they have patterns on their skin or fur? Are they mottled or brindled? Does their covering have a special name?

6. Vocabulary

Increasing the students' vocabulary in other related topic areas improves fluency and understanding and builds confidence. How does this animal move? Which verbs can you use when discussing this animal? Does it make a noise? Does that noise have a name? Can you make that noise? What are the names of the animal's body parts? Does it have any special features? To which group of Australian animals, birds, sea creatures or reptiles does this creature belong? Is it a mammal or monotreme? How many monotremes are there? What is the difference? What is their skin called? Why do you think they are that colour? What is camouflage? Why do they need to be camouflaged? What is the habitat in which they live? What dietary requirements do they have? Are they dangerous or poisonous? Are they predators or prey? Do they have any enemies? Why? Which animal is their worst enemy? How are they hunted? How do they hunt? Are they nocturnal? Are they diurnal? What is their life expectancy? How does it compare with another animal from their country? The list goes on and on.

7. Verbs

Making a list of verbs for each animal can be fun. A picture of the animal could be used to start a mind-map or word web. Verbs can be written around the picture relevant to the part of the body that moves. Different animals can be compared. The students could mime the movements or play games that involve remembering the different movements or sounds made by each different animal.

8. Animal Stories

Sometimes there is a story on TV or in a newspaper which really captures the imagination. For example, last year a family's pet kangaroo saved the life of his master by hopping to the farm house and raising the alarm after the farmer had fallen off his motorbike a long way from the farm house. The kangaroo surprised everyone and was talked about in the paper attributing him with hero-like qualities. Animals can be brave or cunning or funny in different situations. These actions and behaviours could be assessed and examples of personification could be explored. The way animals are portrayed in films or cartoons could also be discussed within the same framework.

This could lead to a discussion about emotions and feelings. Do animals feel things? What emotions and feelings do echidnas or koalas have? How do we know animals feel things? Do we feel the same emotions or feelings? Lots of talking opportunities here! Hunger, thirst, sleepiness and tiredness are all nouns. What feelings are associated with them? Build up a list of adjectives describing each animal – make a different mind map or add on to the one you have made already.

9. Comparisons

Compare and contrast the way Australian animals are 'protected' with animals in the students' own countries. What is the most famous animal in their country? Why is it special? Where does it live? What does it eat? Choose one animal from Australia and compare it with an animal from their own country.

10. Aboriginal Dreamtime

Aboriginal Dreamtime stories are marvelous resources to use to stimulate discussion about folk stories or traditional stories from their own countries. They spark the students' imagination and students could write their own versions of the stories in the narrative genre or they could write the story in report format as a newspaper article for a class or school newsletter. From these Dreamtime stories, students can make up their own versions of 'Aboriginal' skeleton paintings or dot paintings. Allowing the students to express themselves artistically opens a whole new dimension and opportunity for conversation and discussion. Even if students only talk about how they did the painting or what they thought about while they were painting, the activity is worthwhile, memorable, creative, stimulating and fun.



Another writing activity which leads on to students doing illustrations and retelling their own stories can develop from these activities if the students retell one of their favourite children's stories or traditional tales either from their countries or from Australia. See The Three Bears activity.

11. Environmental issues

Environmental issues could be discussed in simple or more detailed forms. What natural disasters can affect animals or threaten their survival? Drought, floods, bushfire, earthquakes, wild extremes of weather can be researched or discussed. Controlled clearing of habitat for farming or new housing developments, legal or illegal clearing of bushland or forests for whatever reason can upset the delicate balance of nature as far as many bush creatures are concerned. What animals, birds

and species have become extinct in Australia since European settlement? People need to make a living. Is what they are doing justifiable in the short or long term? Do such problems occur in other countries? In their own country, what are the environmental problems?

12. Colour, Size and Shape

Students can develop good observational and writing skills and increase their vocabularies on colours, size, shape, texture etc by writing descriptions of their animals. They could do that in a "What am I?" format or make a big book about the animal.

Comparisons between different animals or different countries' animals – size, shape, colours; threatened or endangered species - this activity allows practice in comparative and superlative adjectives, and sparks off a lot of observation and discussion opportunities. The size of the countries, populations, rainfall, climate etc could follow from this too, opening the students' eyes and improving their general knowledge.

13. Songs & Poems

Songs & poems are great opportunities for sharing, improving pronunciation, developing vocabulary, improving listening skills or just having fun. There are lots of Australian animal poems and songs. Who could forget 'Kookaburra sits on the old gum tree' or 'Old man Emu'? There are some great John Williamson songs such as 'Rip rip wood chip', and 'Goodbye Blinky Bill,' which are both about the loss of habitat threatening Australia's wildlife.

14. Australia's Flora & Fauna

Learning or determining Australia's flora, fauna and bird emblems can also be included in an animal based unit of work. Once they have been identified, and are readily recognised, other logos using animals could be researched. Iconic animals (such as the kangaroo used as a Qantas logo) could be identified. This leads to finding other ways animals are used in advertising. Ethics of using animals in advertising, TV or movies and Animal Rights could also be discussed.

15. Grammar

You can use animals to teach grammar. For example, to introduce the difference between present tense verbs and present continuous verbs, use the ABC's production 'Wild Rhapsody' video. Before watching it, ask how each animal can move and after watching it ask what each animal is doing.

Articles, plurals, comparative and superlative adjectives (size, shape), adverbs, (how are they moving/feeling/eating?), conjunctions, countable and uncountable nouns, (discuss what they eat; collective nouns – What is a group of kangaroos called? A mob; What is a group of jellyfish called? A schmuck or a raft of jellyfish). The only limitation to how you use animals in your classroom is you - your time, effort, interest in the subject and your resources.

Remember, Australian wildlife include whales, dolphins, turtles, dugongs, rays, sharks, crabs, squid, cuttlefish, seahorses and sea dragons, abalone, sea snakes – the list goes on and on!!!

The scope is only limited by your resources, imagination or by the time you have to explore this topic.

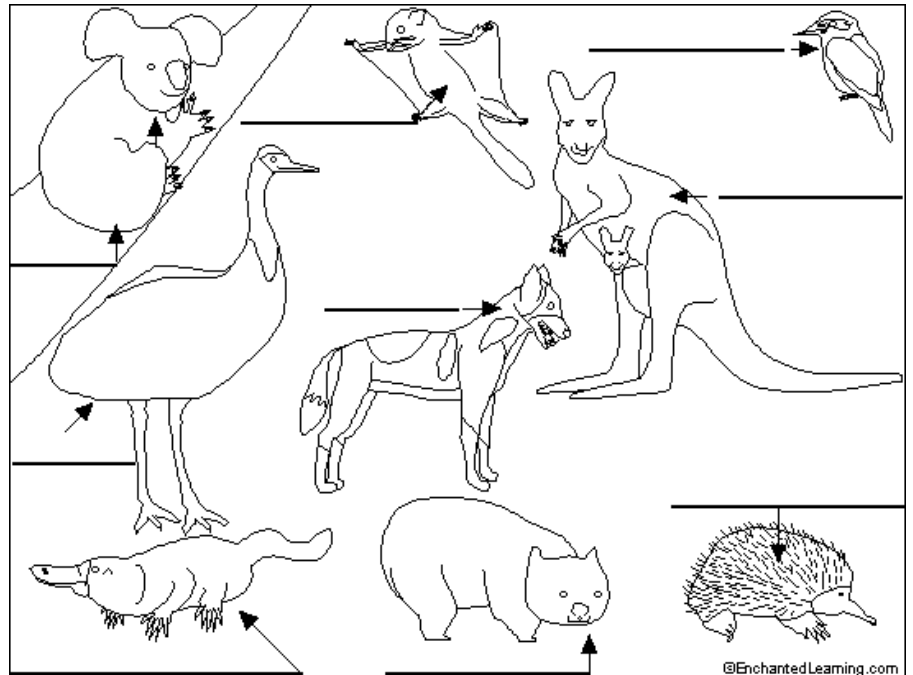
Adapted from 17th Educational Conference Adelaide 2004, English Australia by Helen FLAVEL

Levels 1 and 2

Australian Animals

Write the names of these Australian animals

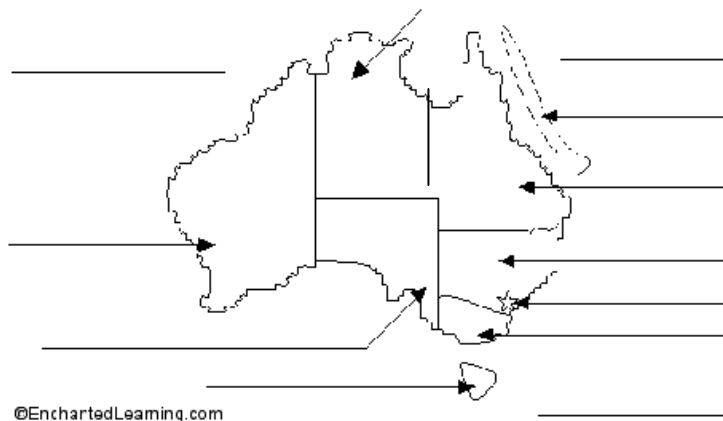
- 1 Dingo
- 2 Emu
- 3 Platypus
- 4 Echidna
- 5 Koala
- 6 Kangaroo
- 7 Kookaburra
- 8 Sugar Glider
- 9 Wombat



Complete the map of Australia

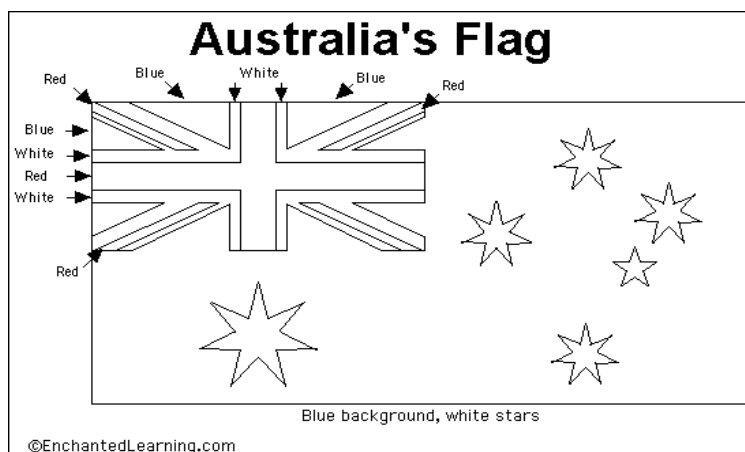
ACT
 New South Wales
 Queensland – Great Barrier Reef
 Western Australia

Victoria
 Northern Territory
 Tasmania
 South Australia



- Australia has states and territories.
- What is the capital city of Australia?
- Which are the largest cities?
- How many people live in Australia?
- What is the nickname of Australia? The Land D _____ U _____
 Why?

Colour the Australian Flag



- Why is there the British flag in the left corner?
- What do the 5 small stars represent? The Southern C_____
- What does the big Commonwealth star mean? The ___ states and the ___ territory.

Language

Australians speak English but some words or expressions can be different: it's called *Australian slang*.

Can you find the Australian slang words for these English words?

English Word	Australian Slang
sick	sickie
a friend	arvo
a day off work	a middy
small glass of beer	mate
afternoon	crook
a person who likes to know your private life	sticky beak
pay for someone	to shout

Sport

- Australians like to play and watch sport. What sports are popular ?

Aborigines

- Who are they?
- Look at the aboriginal flag
- The black represents
- The red represents
- The yellow represents
- What's a "didgeridoo"?
- What's a boomerang?



black
yellow
red

<http://pedagogie.ac-montpellier.fr/disciplines/anglais/ressources/webquests/australia.html>

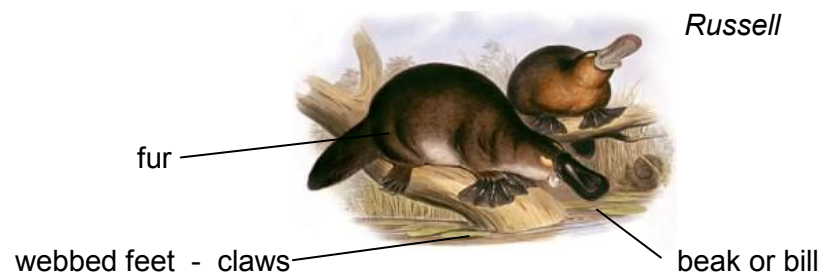
Levels 2 and 3

Look at the vocabulary list before reading this article. Match the vocabulary with the meaning

Vocabulary	meaning
fur	1. the skin of some animals
webbed feet	2. take away dirt
dig	3. toes joined with skin
pouch	4. home for animals
den	5. an animal eaten for food
lick	6. a pocket
prey	7. use the tongue
dusk	8. the start of night
poisonous	9. can hurt and harm
wild	10. outside a zoo

An Australian animal – The Platypus

*by Michael
Russell*



Platypus are small furry animals with a flat tail. They have a beak like a duck and webbed feet for swimming. They have long sharp claws for digging. They use these to dig a den or a home. Platypus live in the water and on land.

They lay eggs and also suckle their young. They have pouches in their cheeks for sand and gravel. This helps them eat worms and small animals with shells. Platypus close their eyes and ear openings when they swim under water.

The mother platypus makes milk from her stomach. The baby platypus or kittens lick the milk off her fur. The male platypus has poisonous spurs on his back ankles. These are to fight with.

The platypus is about 50cm in length. They weigh between one to three kilos and are big eaters. They feed between dusk and early in the morning. Platypus swim with their eyes closed. They find their prey with their bill.

Platypus have been kept in zoos. A New York zoo had two platypus named Cecil and Penelope. They ate twenty five thousand worms a month. They ate crayfish, frogs and fish egg custard. The Platypus were the most expensive animals to feed in the zoo because they ate more in money than the elephants.

The zoo keepers hoped they would have babies but they never did. Penelope escaped from the zoo, and she was never seen again. Cecil lived two more years and then he died.

Platypus can live in the wild for seventeen years because they don't have many enemies.

The platypus is now protected by Australian law.

Article Source adapted from EzineArticles.com

Answer these questions from the text

1. **Platypus are very unusual looking animals**
 - true
 - false
2. **The young ones suckle milk from their mother's teats**
 - true
 - false
3. **Which part of the body does a platypus use to find its food?**
 - eyes
 - beak
 - ears
 - tail
4. **Platypus like to eat worms**
 - true
 - false
5. **Platypus like to live in Zoos**
 - true
 - false
6. **Platypus in a Zoo in New York had young babies.**
 - true
 - false

Levels 2 and 3

Pets

Discuss

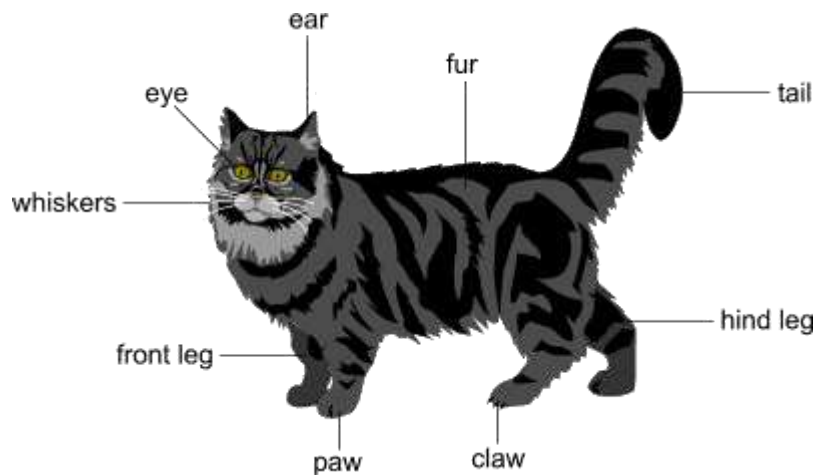
1. Can you name some pets?
2. Do you like pets?
3. Have you ever had a pet?
4. Do you prefer dogs or cats?
5. Many Australian people have pets.
6. What are the advantages of having a pet?
7. What are the disadvantages?



Vocabulary

Do you know the meaning of these words?

popular, different, weighs, fur, hunter, grab, prey,



Read this story about Cats

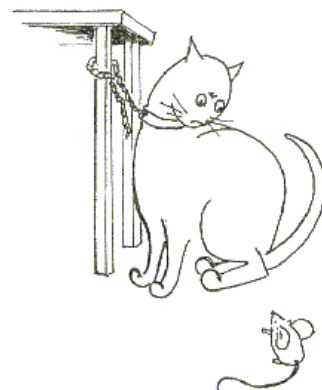
Cats are very popular pets in Australia and there are many different cats.

The fur may be black, white, brown, grey, red, black and white, and tabby. A cat weighs about 4 kgs. Cats are very good hunters. They use their claws and teeth to grab their prey.

Cats will eat mice, birds and other small animals.

Cats can see and hear very well. They can see in the dark and they can hear many sounds that we can't hear. They feel with their whiskers.

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Cat Language

Cats say 'meow'. If they are happy, they purr. If a cat is angry, it wags its tail and hisses. Watch the eyes, ears and tail of a cat. This will tell you how a cat feels.

Things a cat needs

- **food and water** –

There are many different types of food in a supermarket, tinned and dry food.

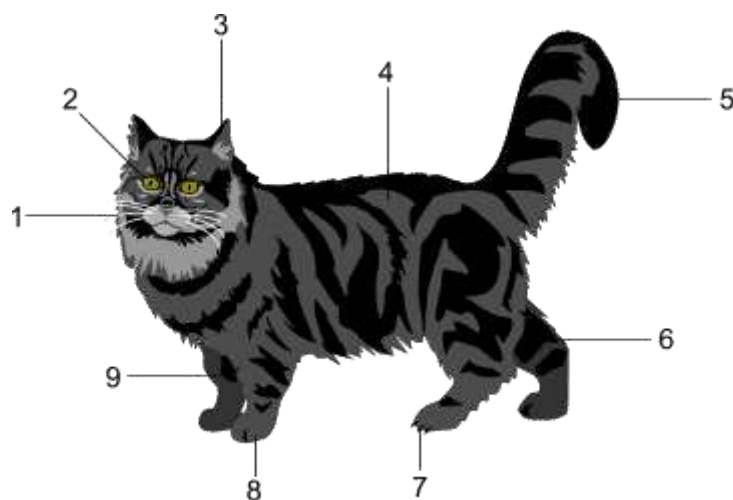
A cat must always have fresh water.

- Always use a **cat carrier** to transport your cat in the car.
- **a place to sleep** - This can be a an old cushion or a blanket.
- **toys** - Pet shops have lots of toys for cats. The most important thing is to play with your cat.
- **a scratching post** - A cat needs to scratch its claws. If you don't have a post, a cat will scratch your furniture.



Can you name the parts of a cat's body?

Match the underlined words in the story on the cat with the diagram below.



Tick the correct answers

A cat weighs about	10 kilos	1 kilo	4 kilos
A cat says	meow	quack	woof
A cat drinks	tea	coke	fresh water
A cat's prey are	dogs	mice	birds
Cats sleep on	cushions	blankets	beds
Cats scratch your furniture with their	tail	whiskers	claws

Cat Idioms

copy cat	a person who does the same thing as someone else	My sister is such a copy cat . First she bought the same car as me, and now she's going to my school.
let the cat out of the bag	tell a secret	Who let the cat out of the bag about the surprise party?
raining cats and dogs	heavy rain	I forgot my umbrella, and it was raining cats and dogs .
cat nap	a short sleep	I'm going to have a cat nap while you're cooking dinner.
cat's got your tongue	said about someone who doesn't speak (usually shy)	It looks like the cat's got your tongue , Mary. Are you always this quiet?

Fill in the correct idiom in the sentence

1. The soccer game is cancelled because it's _____.
2. My father always has a _____ after Christmas lunch.
3. What's the matter? Has the _____
4. Who _____ about mum's Christmas present .
5. You're a _____. Your work is the same as mine.

For more great ESL teaching materials on Australian animals visit:
<http://www.zoo.org.au/education/learningresources/hs/esl/eslresourcebook.pdf>