

Learning Target (S5L2.a): I can ask questions to compare and contrast instincts and learned behaviors.

### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Hands-on Lab Activity: Instincts vs. Learned Behaviors Milestones Prep

#### **Introduction: Why Do Animals Do What They Do?**

Have you ever wondered why baby sea turtles crawl toward the ocean without anyone teaching them? Or why your dog can learn to “sit” when trained? These actions come from **instincts** (behaviors animals are born with) and **learned behaviors** (actions animals acquire through experience or teaching).

In this lab, you will **observe, compare, and sort examples of animal behaviors**, then ask and answer questions about whether they are instincts or learned behaviors.

#### **Materials**

- Behavior cards (with pictures and descriptions — attached below)
- Sorting chart (Instinct vs. Learned – see below)
- Notebook or recording sheet
- Markers/crayons for group charting
- Optional: Short video clips of animals (birds building nests, pets being trained, etc.)

#### **Procedure (Step-by-Step)**

- 1. Engage**
  - Teacher shows a short clip or picture of baby chicks pecking for food and a dog learning a trick.
  - Class discusses: *Which behavior is instinct? Which is learned?*
- 2. Explore**
  - In small groups, students receive a set of **Behavior Cards**.
  - Each card has an animal behavior description (see sample table below).
- 3. Sort & Classify**
  - Students place cards on a **T-Chart: Instinct vs. Learned Behaviors**.
  - Example:
    - **Instinct:** Spider spinning a web.
    - **Learned:** Student learning to ride a bike.
- 4. Ask Questions**
  - After sorting, groups write **at least 2 questions** comparing instincts and learned behaviors.
  - Example Questions:
    - Why do some animals rely more on instincts than learned behaviors?
    - Can a behavior be both instinct and learned?
- 5. Communicate Findings**
  - Groups share one example and one question with the class.
  - Teacher leads discussion using **Georgia examples** (e.g., brown thrashers building nests = instinct; Georgia dogs being trained for search and rescue = learned).

Learning Target (S5L2.a): I can ask questions to compare and contrast instincts and learned behaviors.

### Behavior Sorting Chart

Behavior Example	Instinct (I) or Learned Behavior? (LB)
Baby sea turtle crawling to ocean	
Dog trained to fetch a ball	
Bird building a nest	
Student learning multiplication facts	
Deer running from a predator	
A child learning to play piano	

### Milestones Practice Tips

- **Common Misconception:** Students often confuse repeated practice (learned) with something animals are born knowing (instinct).
- **Milestones Question Types:** Expect classification tables, scenario-based questions, or short passages where students must decide if behaviors are instinctive or learned.

### Lab Review Milestones-Style Practice Questions

1. A baby sea turtle immediately crawls toward the ocean after hatching. This is an example of (DOK 2)

- A. Learned behavior                      B. Instinct                      C. Training                      D. Imitation

2. Which of the following are learned behaviors? (DOK 2)

- A. A dog rolls over after hearing a command.                      B. A spider spins a web.  
C. A child learns to read.                      D. A baby cries when hungry.

3. Look at the table below:

Animal Behavior	Type (Instinct or Learned Behavior)?
Bird migrating south in winter	
Student solving math problems	
Cat hunting for mice	

Which is the correct classification? (DOK 3)

- A. Bird = Instinct; Student = Learned; Cat = Instinct  
B. Bird = Learned; Student = Instinct; Cat = Learned  
C. Bird = Instinct; Student = Instinct; Cat = Learned  
D. Bird = Learned; Student = Learned; Cat = Instinct

Learning Target (S5L2.a): I can ask questions to compare and contrast instincts and learned behaviors.

**4. A zookeeper notices that baby elephants know how to use their trunks to drink water, but they must be shown how to stack logs for enrichment activities. What conclusion can be made? (DOK 3)**

- A. Both are instincts
- B. Both are learned
- C. Drinking with trunk = instinct; stacking logs = learned
- D. Drinking with trunk = learned; stacking logs = instinct

**5. Explain why a mockingbird in Georgia singing its song is an instinct, while a child learning to sing in choir is a learned behavior. Use evidence to support your answer.** \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

Learning Target (S5L2.a): I can ask questions to compare and contrast instincts and learned behaviors.

**Behavior Cards:**

<p><b>Tying your shoe:</b></p> 	<p><b>A dog protecting its owner:</b></p> 
<p><b>Baby crying from loud noise:</b></p> 	<p><b>A young man playing an instrument:</b></p> 
<p><b>A dolphin doing tricks:</b></p> 	<p><b>A snake's knowledge of how to hunt:</b></p> 
<p><b>Monarch butterflies migrating:</b></p> 	<p><b>A lion cub learning to hunt:</b></p> 
<p><b>A dog sitting on command:</b></p> 	<p><b>Mockingbird chirp singing:</b></p> 