**ACTIVITY: Make a wanted poster**

**Activity idea**

In this activity, students use their skills of observation and scientific drawing to make a wanted poster for an insect. Included on the poster is a description of the features of their insect and details of where it might be found.

By the end of this activity, students should be able to:

* confidently describe and document the features of an insect
* explain why careful observation is an important skill for scientists.

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**Introduction/background**

Careful observation and drawing is very important to scientists. When they find a new species of insect, they need to be able to draw it very accurately to help them describe it to other scientists around the world.

The students’ task is to make a wanted poster using the information they have found out about their live insect or photos. Each wanted poster will need a big picture and a short description of where the insect might live, which can be used to help others to find the ‘lost’ insect.

Watch the video clip [Observation in science](https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/videos/703-observation-in-science) to find out from Associate Professor Alison Cree and Dr Phil Bishop the importance of observation in science using examples from their research into reptiles and amphibians. It may be appropriate for you to share this video clip with your class to generate discussion about observation skills. Some discussion starters:

* What senses help to make good observations?
* Why do you think observation is an important skill for scientists?
* What other methods do scientists use to collect information about animals?
* What is the difference between an everyday observation and a scientific observation?
* How does a scientist’s background knowledge about an animal help them to make better observations?

**What you need**

* An insect or a picture of one for each student
* Access to information about insects (books, posters, internet etc.)
* Suitable insect containers that are big enough to contain the insect comfortably and allow it to breathe but not allow the insect to escape – film canisters, small plastic bottles, plastic jars or similar with holes in the lid are ideal

**What to do**

1. Explain the activity to the students. Ask them to start by looking at their insect very carefully. How many legs does it have? What does the head look like? Does it have wings? How many pairs of wings does it have? Does it have different colours on different areas of its body?
2. Ask them to draw the insect carefully to make sure someone who might find the insect can recognise it.
3. Ask them to think about where someone might find the insect. Where should they look? Where does the insect normally live? Does it live in trees, on the ground or underground? What sort of food does it like to eat? Include enough details on the poster so that people reading it would know where to look for the insect. Encourage students to refer to other resources to find these details if they are unsure.
4. Display the posters so that people can start to look for the missing insects!
5. If students have collected live insects for this study, remember to release them back where they were found.

**Extension idea**

Your students may also be interested in the [Learning to see](https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/1400-observation-learning-to-see) activity.