



What's in the Box?

In this activity, participants guess various items that are placed in a box and learn about how they relate to animal and biomedical research. Each participant is blindfolded or positioned so they are unable to see the item in the box. You may cut a hole in the box so those watching can see the item. This activity is customizable and can incorporate items found around your house, office, institution, or veterinary clinic. This is a great way to involve a larger audience, such as a class of students, but can be used for a group of any size.

Materials needed:

- Cardboard box
- Blindfold or bandana
- Items to be used in the box

Instructions:

1. Cut 1 or 2 6-inch diameter holes in the side of the box (opposite sides of the box if cutting two). Set the box on its side so the inside of the box can be viewed by the audience and not the participant.
2. Ask the participant to put on a blindfold or close their eyes.
3. Once the participant is blindfolded, place an item in the box. See the list below for ideas of items to use and information about how they relate to animals involved in research.
4. Ask the participant to put their hand(s) in the box through the hole(s) to guess the item inside. Give them hints along the way as needed.
5. Reveal the item and explain how it relates to animals in research.

Item Examples:

- Medication or pill bottle – Discuss the role of animals in the development of drugs and medications. You may look up the specific animals that were involved in the creation of the treatment.
 - Ibuprofen (Advil) – guinea pigs
 - Acetaminophen (Tylenol) – rabbits, dogs
 - Bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol) – FDA approved for use in dogs, cats, horses, and cattle for treating diarrhea
 - Cold medicine – research is currently underway to find a cure for the common cold using mouse models
- Enrichment devices and toys – Many items are used as enrichment devices for animals. If you work at a research institution, consider borrowing unused items.
 - Dumbbell – used by rabbits
 - Kong – used by dogs
 - Paint roller with bird seed – used by rhesus macaques - easily created, helps to facilitate foraging, and is a sweet treat
 - Hanging coconut cells - used by squirrel and owl monkeys to increase foraging and manipulation
 - AstroTurf forage board - used by rhesus macaques, among other animals, to increase foraging and encourage cooperative feeding
 - Foraging ball puzzle - used by nonhuman primates to increase foraging and manipulation behavior
- Food enrichment – Treats are often used as rewards and to increase natural behaviors.
 - Frozen broth in a cup – used by dogs
 - Grapes – a high value reward for monkeys!
 - Ensure - given to pigs as a treat and after surgery when they are less interested in solid food
 - Marshmallows – can be used in small amounts as a high value reward for monkeys
 - Prize Eggs – used to increase foraging