



Family Learning Activity: Family Computer Time

(A Walk in the Forest, Habitat Adventure: Panda Challenge, Design a Panda Habitat)

Family time at the computer can encourage social interaction between you and your children. Visit a local library to engage in our fun, online simulations involving real-world conservation decisions.

Through **A Walk in the Forest**, a virtual walk through a fictional Virginia forest, you will use authentic scientific techniques and tools to explore the temperate forest in North America. <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/education/conservationcentral/walk/>



Habitat Adventure: Panda Challenge introduces families to some of the conservation challenges in the temperate forests of central China and involves you in making decisions to balance the needs of people, plants, animals, and their habitats. <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/education/conservationcentral/challenge/>

Ideas for Engaging in Interactives with Your Children:

- 1. Read books or watch videos before engaging in the simulations to spark interest and build background knowledge.** Check out a giant panda or temperate forest book such as *Smithsonian Book of Giant Pandas* (2002).
- 2. Take an active role at the computer.** You (as parent) may choose to read the text that appears in the program, while your child makes the selections with the mouse. Or, encourage your child to read the text (drawing on his/her reading skills) as you make selections with the mouse.
- 3. Talk with your child.** Build anticipation by having your child make predictions (“What do you think will happen when it rains after they’ve cut down all the trees?”). Remind her or him of what they already know (“Remember we learned that animals need habitats to live? What do you think could happen if the giant panda loses its habitat?”). Asking questions about their choices encourages reflection.
- 4. Encourage older siblings to help younger siblings.** For example, your twelve-year-old may help walk your five-year-old through the simulation game.
- 5. Follow up on other Web activities that link from simulations.** For example, you can create a panda postcard together and mail it to a relative, or create plans for a new panda habitat at the Zoo. Together, look for news about your favorite animals and their habitats on the National Zoo’s website. <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/>
- 6. Visit the National Zoo or your local zoo to look for some of the animals from Asia and North America that you encountered online.** The Smithsonian’s National Zoo in Washington, D.C., Zoo Atlanta, Memphis Zoo, and The San Diego Zoo have giant pandas. Look for as many temperate-forest animals as you can. Reinforce the connection between animals and habitats by having your children point out trees and water sources that would also be found in the animal’s habitat in the wild.

Green Tip

Get involved with a local habitat conservation issue. Contact a local nature organization to find out how you can help conserve habitats in your community.