



# Toad Abode

## Developing Habitat for Wildlife—How to Activity

### Background Info

Toads are a common sight around the school. Toads belong to the *Class Amphibia* (amphibians). Salamanders, Toads, Frogs and Newts are the different *Orders* within this *Amphibia Class*.

The differences between toads and frogs is very cloudy. In general, though, the typical toad has a dry-warty skin and short legs for hopping, and the typical frog has a moist-smooth skin and long legs for leaping. Both are found on land and in the water, but toads can live far from water.

Male toads, like male frogs advertise their presence with their own special call, especially when they are trying to find a mate during breeding season. If you have any standing water around the school, you will probably find it filled with tadpoles from your resident toads.

Through the following activity, we will be focusing on the construction of a shelter for toads called a toad abode that you can place within your outdoor classroom. But of course, other creatures are allowed to seek shelter under this structure.

### Materials

One six to eight inch sturdy plastic or terra cotta pot per student, paper or cloth bags, hammer, assorted ceramic tiles , ceramic tile adhesive (this comes in a premixed tub and a quart container should be enough for 6-8 students, popsicle sticks, newspaper, and grout

### Preparation

You will need a clean and sturdy plastic or terra cotta plant pot for this activity. In addition, you will need to acquire a supply of ceramic tiles, broken pottery/plates, glass beads or other objects that can be glued to the pot and exposed to the weather. If you are going to break your own ceramic tiles or plates, you will want to place them in a paper sack or cloth sack before you strike them with a hammer as this will keep the pieces from flying around the room. In addition, you will want everyone wearing safety glasses while the tiles are being broken.

Once the pieces are broken, you will want to be extremely careful in handling the broken pieces as they will have very sharp edges. Once again, a little caution can't hurt so have the students wear thin gloves or tape up their fingers with sports tape so that they are protected from the sharp edges.

### Procedure

1. Clean the pots and then carefully make a hole along the lip that is about 4 inches across and approximately 3 inches tall. (If you are using plastic pots, you can cut the hole with a sharp knife or saw. If you are using terra cotta, be careful as you try to cut the hole because the pot can easily break. You may need to use a saw with a tile blade.)
2. Once the pot is ready, break the ceramic tile by placing it in a paper bag or cloth bag and then place it on a hard surface and strike it with the flat side of a hammer. You will need to do this several times as you keep breaking the tile into smaller pieces (about 1-2 inches in size as larger pieces will be hard to glue on the rounded pots). **WEAR SAFETY GLASSES THROUGHOUT THIS STEP!**
3. Once the tile is broken, cover your work area with newspaper and measure about a cup of ceramic tile adhesive into a plastic cup. Place a popsicle stick in the adhesive as this will be your spreading stick.
4. Don't spread the adhesive directly onto the pot as this will require you to work faster than you may want to and it is easier to handle the pot while working. As you select the piece of tile, spread a thin layer of the adhesive on the backside of the tile using the stick and then firmly press it onto the pot.

Keep repeating this with other pieces of tile until you have the entire pot covered leaving only a 1/4" space between pieces of tile. (If you have multiple colors of tile, encourage the students to create a colorful work of art.)

5. Once the pot is covered with the tile pieces, let it dry for several hours (see the label on the tub of adhesive for the exact time) or until the tile is firmly attached to the pot.
6. Carefully mix up a batch of grout following the directions on the bag or you can purchase premixed grout. The grout will need to be mixed with water and is ready to use once it is mixed to the consistency of frosting.
7. Press the grout into all of the spaces between the tiles. Use a damp sponge to help press the grout into the gaps. You will also use this same sponge to wipe off any excess grout. Wipe the whole thing down with water until the grout is removed from the surface of the tiles but be careful not to remove it from between the tiles.
8. Let your new toad abode dry completely before you place it in the garden
9. When you are ready to put it in the garden, find a shady spot and then place the toad abode, open end down on the ground so that a toad can hop under the cover of the new shelter.
10. Be patient! It could take a while for a toad to move in to your new home.



A completed Toad Abode made from a plastic flower pot.