

# Building a Beaver Dam

In this activity, you will learn about beavers and put your engineering skills to the test as you build your own beaver dam using materials found in your backyard.



**First, let's learn about beavers by watching this video:**

- ▶ Let's Learn About Beavers (Vamos a Aprender de los Castor...)



## What did you learn in the video?

Can you list 3 fun facts about beavers? What unique features make beavers suitable for semiaquatic living?

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# Time to build a beaver dam!

Now, let's build our own beaver dams. Follow the steps below.

## Step 1: Gather materials

You will need the following materials:

- A container to hold dam building materials

Examples: A bag, bucket, or basket



- A shallow container that can hold water

Examples: A plastic tub, a baking pan, or wide dish



- A container for pouring water

Examples: A pitcher, watering can, or a large bottle



## Step 2: Collect dam building materials

You can search outside or inside to find items to build your dam with.

### Examples of dam building materials:

Rocks, mud, sticks, pine cones, leaves, moss, bouncy balls, pencils, clay, play-doh, rubber bands, or whatever else you can think of!



### Step 3: Build your dam

Using all your materials, build a dam that goes across the tub or pan and up the sides.



As you do so, think about how the beavers build. Do they make piles of rocks, sticks, and mud? Or do they mix these materials together to form their dam?

## Step 4: Test your dam

Tilt the pan so that one end is higher than the other end. Then, using your pitcher or bottle, slowly pour water into the higher “upstream” side of the pan.



Actual beaver dams do not completely block water flow from passing through the dam; in fact, it's important that the dam does pass flow so as to allow for upstream fish passage.

Watch to see how much water makes it through your dam to the lower “downstream” side of the dish.

# Reflection Questions

**How much water did your dam hold back? Did it allow some or all of the water to flow through?**

- Which materials worked and which did not?
- What materials could be more useful?
- What would you do differently next time?

**How do you think beavers learn to build so well?**

- Why do beavers build dams?
- Why do you think beavers work at night?
- If you were a beaver, where would you build your dam?

