

Animal Technology

Technology is a tool used to solve a problem or reach a goal. When you think of technology you probably think of humans. But are humans the only animals that use tools? It turns out that many other animals also use tools to solve problems. Animals like mammals, birds, fish, and insects all use forms of technology to reach their goals.

Primates such as chimpanzees, apes, and monkeys, are known for using tools. They crack nuts with stones and fish for ants with sticks. Elephants create tools with their trunks. They use the tools to scratch and swat flies. They also plug up waterholes so the water does not evaporate and reach food that is too high for their trunks.

Ocean mammals use tools too. Dolphins use sea sponges to protect their beaks when they are looking for food. Sea otters use rocks to break open clams to eat. Other ocean dwellers, like the octopus, gather rocks and shells to create shelter.

Birds have also been known to use tools. Crows make probes out of twigs to catch larvae for food. Weaver birds build complicated nests. They use their beaks to cut grass and tie knots in the grass with their feet. Parrots also use tools that act like clamps to hold nuts steady while they crack them.



Some birds, like carrion crows in Japan, employ humans as tools. They drop nuts in front of cars to crack them open.

It is clear that tool use, a form of technology, is not unique to humans. If humans take the time to study the ways that animals solve problems and reach goals, we just might learn a few new things ourselves.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

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 - a. Elephant
 - b. Crow
 - c. Octopus
 - d. Ant

2. How do sea otters use tools?
 - a. They plug up waterholes
 - b. They gather shells to create shelter
 - c. They crack clams with rocks
 - d. They use twigs to catch larvae

3. What is an example of animals using humans as tools?
 - a. Weaver birds tying knots in grass
 - b. Carrion crows dropping nuts in front of cars
 - c. Dolphins using sea sponges to protect their beaks
 - d. Chimpanzees fishing for ants with sticks

4. What does the author mean by, “we just might learn a few new things ourselves”?
 - a. Animals can teach humans how to solve problems
 - b. Humans are better than animals
 - c. Animals are better than humans
 - d. Humans can teach animals how to solve problems

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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