Growing Up is Hard to Do

Objective

Acting as a sea lion pup, the student will be able to discover some of the survival challenges these young animals face.

Materials

per student group:
- ❑ copy of Challenge Cards, page 2
- ❑ one jump rope
- ❑ 10 or more poker chips
- ❑ one empty half-gallon milk carton
- ❑ two or more yard or meter sticks

Background

The first years of an animal's life are often the most difficult. Only 40% to 60% of California sea lion pups survive their first year. Weather, ocean currents, disease, and food availability can change the number of predators or prey.

Action

1. Before you begin, set up the playing lanes in a large field by arranging the game elements in the following order: start/finish line, challenge cards, jump rope, milk carton and poker chips, yardsticks, and a turn-around place. Place the yardsticks about 2 ft. apart. Each lane represents an area where sea lions are found and the challenges a sea lion might face in its first few years.

2. Introduce the game by asking students what they think a sea lion pup's life is like. Discuss how young sea lions often don't survive the first few years. Discuss some dangers a sea lion pup might encounter. Ask students for an estimate: Out of every 10 pups, how many survive the first year?

3. Divide the class into student groups, making each group a team. Show them the challenge course. To "survive" each student must:

   • Pick up one Challenge Card and follow the instructions.

   • Jump rope four times or more (avoiding predators).

   • Place poker chip between the knees and drop into milk carton (eating is not easy).

   • Jump onto land by jumping over the yardsticks (haul out to rest).

   • Return (jumping into the ocean again and returning to start without doing the other challenges).

4. Begin play with teams lined up behind the starting line of each playing lane. Team members play one at a time and tag the next team member to begin. Students are "out" if they miss the jump rope, miss the milk carton, can't jump over the yardsticks, or if a Challenge Card says so.

5. At the conclusion, count how many pups "survived" their first year. Take that number, divide it by the total number of players, and multiply by 100. This gives you the percentage of sea lions that survived. How well did you do?
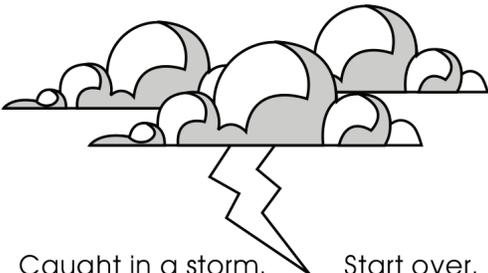
Caught in a storm.   Start over.

A shark is chasing you.
Walk backwards to the next challenge.
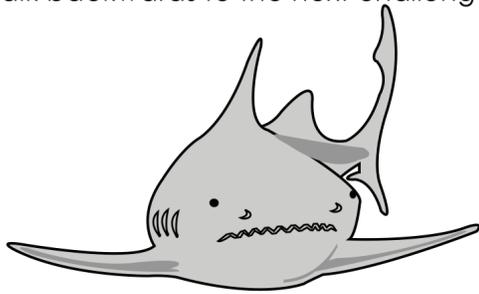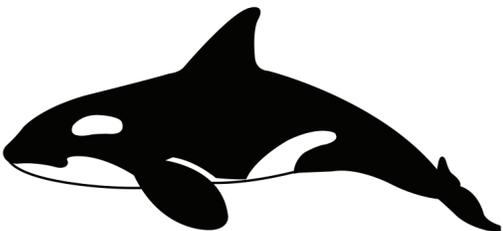
You become a snack for a killer whale.
You are out.
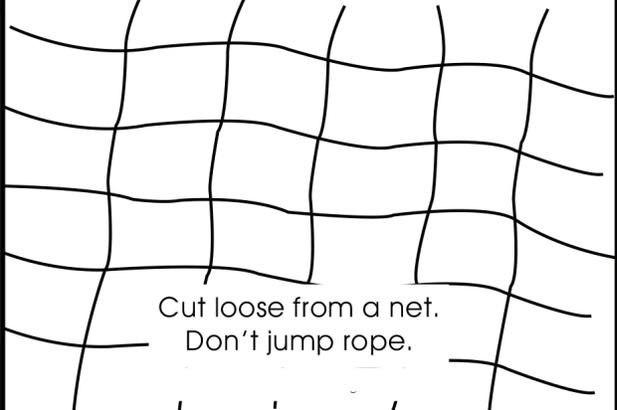
Cut loose from a net.
Don't jump rope.
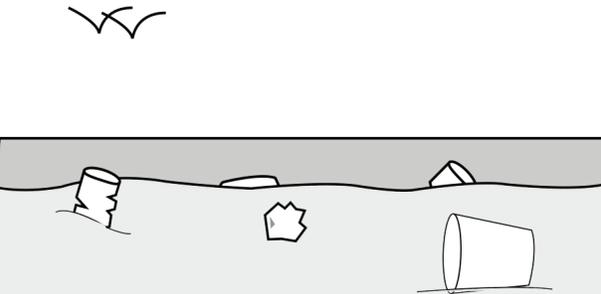
Yea! A beach clean-up. Skip a turn and rest.
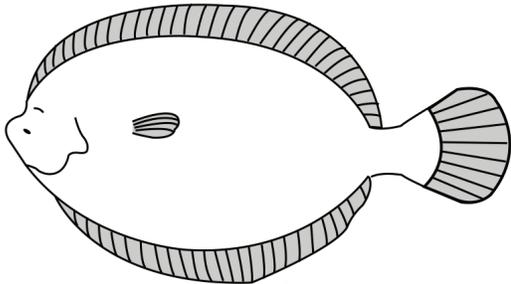
Ate an extra large lunch. Skip food challenge

No extra challenges today.

Caught in trash.
Hop on one foot to next challenge.