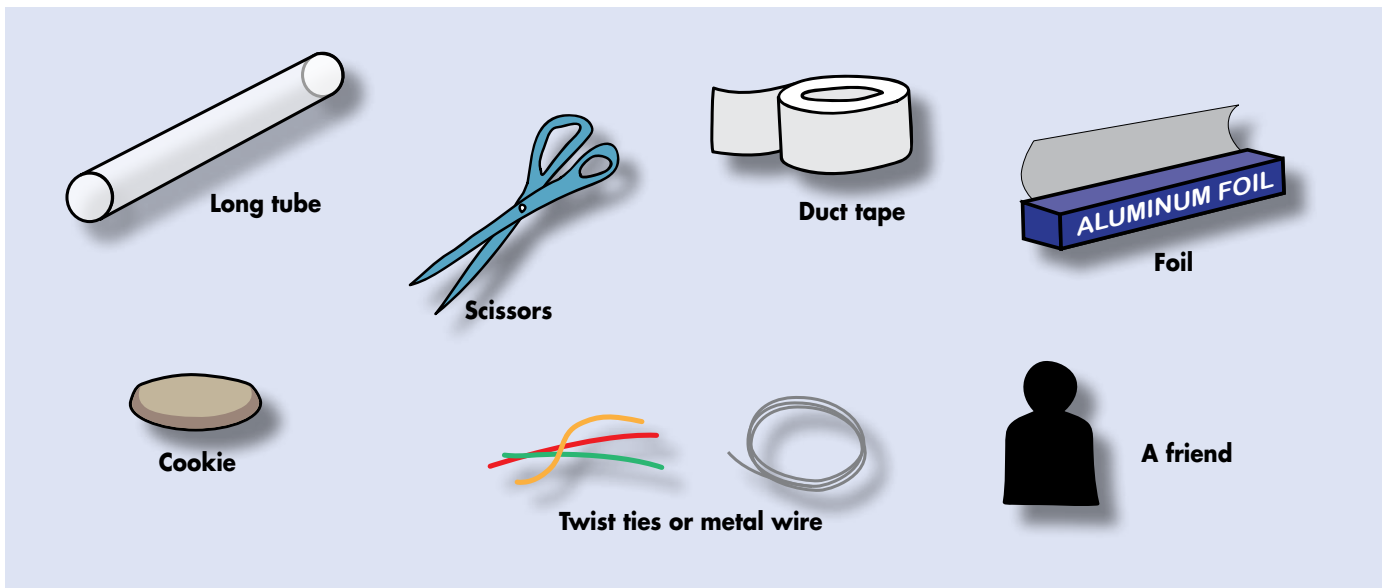




Crow Creativity

Find What You Need...

- Long clear tube 8-10 inches long or a paper towel roll
- Scissors if you are using a paper towel roll
- Duct tape
- Aluminum Foil
- Cookie or other small treat
- Twist ties or metal wire
- A friend



Can you solve a problem as creatively as a crow?

Crows and their relatives, ravens, are able to solve all kinds of problems. Scientists have observed ravens untying ropes to get at food. They've been seen counting out pieces of food so they'll know how many pieces they can carry. They make use of moving cars to crack open hard nuts so they can eat what's inside. And much to their shock, scientists who have captured crows to study them and then released them, were later chased down by those crows (and the crows' friends), who remembered the scientists' faces. In fact, the crows have chased them down so much that now the scientists wear masks when they are walking near the crows.

When scientists set up the following problem-solving test for crows, the crows were able to solve it in just a few minutes. Can you?

Animal Fact:

In Canada, ravens have been seen on the roofs of super markets waiting for shoppers to walk under them. When they do, the ravens push snow on their heads!

Activity Instructions

1. Build a tricky tube puzzle to find out if your friends can solve a problem like a crow. To begin, find a tube. A clear plastic tube is best, but a paper towel roll, cut down to about 8 inches, will work too.
2. Make a basket out of tin foil. The basket should be big enough to hold a small cookie.
3. Tear some strips off a roll of duct tape. Lay the roll of tape flat on a table and fit the tube inside the center of the duct tape roll. Then use the duct tape strips to tape the tube in place so that the tube stays upright. Tape along the side. Do not cover the openings of the tube in tape.
4. Put a cookie in your basket and drop the basket into the tube so it goes to the bottom of the tube with the handle facing up.
5. Place about 5 twist ties or a piece of long metal wire next to your tube.
6. Find a friend to solve this problem. Tell your friend that there is a cookie at the bottom of the tube. Your friend can have the cookie but has to get the cookie out of the tube first without lifting up the tube. If you are using a paper towel roll, let your friend look inside the tube to see how it's set up.
7. How did your friend do? Crows are able to solve the problem by using their beaks to form a hook out of the metal wire. They then hook the wire onto the handle of the basket and use the wire to carefully lift up the basket with the treat inside. Was your friend able to solve this problem as well as a crow?

Conclusions

One kind of thinking that animals do is problem solving. Problem-solving skills are very important because animals may need those same skills in the wild to find food and shelter and to avoid their predators. One problem that ravens and crows have solved very well is how to live close to humans without getting in their way. The next time you're outside, look around. You may find a flock of ravens or a murder of crows waiting nearby.



Crows can use tools, solve problems and recognize faces.

Brain Buster:

A group of ravens is called a "flock".

A group of crows is called a "murder". Can you guess why?