

Marine Life Stratego

Activity guide: a live, outdoor game about the ocean food chain



Players	15 to 60, in two teams
Time	About an hour, including a short introduction
Ages	Any
Where	Outdoors, on a field with a centre line
You need	One deck of cards per team, bandanas or bibs in two team colours, something to mark the field, and two adults as game masters

What students learn

- How a marine food chain works, from plankton eaters to top predators.
- How people change marine life, for worse and for better: overfishing (especially of animals high in the food chain), ghost nets, marine protected areas and clean-ups.

Before you play

Print one deck per team from the printable cards file. Each deck has 61 cards, in the numbers listed below. Printing each team's deck on paper in its team colour makes the decks easy to tell apart. Start with a short talk about the topics above, or use the classroom slides.

Setting up

1. Split the group into two equal teams, one on each side of the centre line. Each team has a game master.
2. The game master shuffles the team's deck and gives every player one card. One player gets the pearl.
3. Players hold their cards against their chest so the other team can't see them. The game master helps the team plan how to protect its pearl and keep its sharks and cleaner wrasse safe.

How to play

1. Any player can tag any player from the other team. The only exception is the ghost net, which can't tag anyone.
2. When two players tag, they show each other their cards. The higher rank wins and keeps the other player's card.
3. The player who lost goes back to their game master for a new card, then rejoins the game.
4. If both cards have the same rank, it's a draw and both players keep their cards.
5. The first team to tag the player holding the other team's pearl wins.

Two twists

The ghost net beats every card except the diver, who removes it. It can't tag anyone, so it has to be tagged, just as fish swim into ghost nets rather than being chased by them.

The cleaner wrasse beats the shark by cleaning it, but loses to every other card.

Ranks and cards

Rank	Card	Cards per team	Special rule
9	 Shark	1	
8	 Trevally	4	
7	 Grouper	6	
6	 Snapper	7	
5	 Butterfly fish	8	
4	 Shrimp	9	
3	 Diver	6	Beats the ghost net by removing it
2	 Jellyfish	10	
1	 Cleaner wrasse	2	Beats the shark by cleaning it
-	 Ghost net	6	Traps every card except the diver. Can't tag.
-	 Pearl	2	Tag the other team's pearl to win
Total		61	

Talk about it afterwards

- What happened to your team when your sharks were caught? What happens to a real reef when the sharks are fished out?
- How did the ghost nets change the game? Where do ghost nets come from, and who can remove them?
- What would make a reef safer for every animal in the deck? Think about protected areas, fishing rules and clean-ups.

A variation

Instead of pearl cards, paint two coconuts as pearls and hide one in each team's area. The first team to find the other team's pearl wins.

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