



# Calling All Turkeys

Grade Level: 5-8

Subject Areas: science

Duration:

Preparation - 20 minutes

Activity, Part 1 - 20 minutes

Activity, Part 2 - 30-50 minutes

Setting:

Classroom or outside

Group Size:

unlimited

Materials:

- clear plastic cups - one per student
- cups of differing size and material
- strong thread (not string or yarn) - enough for two 12 inch long pieces per student.

Skills Used:

listening, constructing, investigating, analyzing.

Vocabulary:

communication.

Project BEAK Links:

- [Adaptations - Communication](#)

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will construct a Wild Turkey call to demonstrate the communication methods of the Wild Turkey.
- Students will investigate which cup size, material and shape make the most realistic turkey call.

## Nebraska State Science Standards

- 5.2.1, 8.2.1, 8.4.3

## BACKGROUND

With over twelve different calls, the Wild Turkey is no stranger to good communication. From the gobble to the cluck, the sounds of the Wild Turkey let you know exactly what they are doing.

Some of the most common turkey calls include:

- **Tree Call** – This call is typically made from the roost in a tree first thing in the morning. The call is to other members of the flock as if to say “Good Morning, how are you? Should we begin the day?”
- **Gobble** – This call is made primarily by male turkeys in the spring to attract female turkeys for mating.
- **Putt** – This is a short, one-syllabled alarm call. When used in a series, it indicates that the turkey has seen or heard danger.
- **Cluck** – This call is usually in a series of short, soft notes. It is used to get the attention of another turkey.
- **Purr** – A soft, rolling call, the purr is often made by content turkeys mainly when they are feeding.
- **Assembly Call** – This call is usually made by the adult hen when calling her young poults.

## ACTIVITY, PART 1

1. Give each student one clear plastic cup. Instruct students to turn the cup over and poke two pin holes approximately 1 inch apart in the bottom of the cup. Students may also want to try varying distances to determine the effect this has on the sound produced.



2. Next have students pass the thread through the pin holes so that the thread is hanging down the inside of the over turned cup.



3. Have students tie the two dangling threads together as close as they can to the bottom of the over turned cup.



4. Instruct students to wet the thread (licking fingers and running it along the thread works best).

5. To make the call, have students grasp the thread between their thumb and forefinger and pull in a jerking motion.

**ACTIVITY, PART 2**

1. Have students create the same call as in Part 1 with different cups of varying size, shape, and material.
2. Conduct a classroom experiment to determine which cup makes the best call. To compare sounds to actual turkey calls, visit the National Wild Turkey Federation: Sounds of the Wild Turkey website at [www.nwtf.org/all\\_about\\_turkeys/sounds\\_of\\_turkeys.html](http://www.nwtf.org/all_about_turkeys/sounds_of_turkeys.html)

**EXTENSIONS**

- Have students create “box” style turkey calls or “slate” turkey calls.
- Take students on a field trip to a nature center, nature preserve, or local wild area to practice their turkey calls with real turkeys. Caution: care should be taken when using calls during mating season.

**ASSESSMENT**

- Evaluate students participation in the creation of turkey calls and/or the turkey call investigation in Part 2 of the activity.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: WEBSITES**

- National Wild Turkey Federation  
[www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org)
- National Wild Turkey Federation: Sounds of the Wild Turkey  
[www.nwtf.org/all\\_about\\_turkeys/sounds\\_of\\_turkeys.html](http://www.nwtf.org/all_about_turkeys/sounds_of_turkeys.html)
- Environmental Education for Kids (EEK!): Wild Turkey Hunting  
[www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/eeek/nature/trkyhunt.htm#call](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/eeek/nature/trkyhunt.htm#call)
- Understanding Turkey Communication  
[www.bowhunting.net/eMagazine/Articles/001-TRMichels22.html](http://www.bowhunting.net/eMagazine/Articles/001-TRMichels22.html)
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
Nebraska Wildlife Species: Turkey  
[www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildlife/turkey.asp](http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildlife/turkey.asp)

- Cornell Lab of Ornithology: All About Birds - Wild Turkey  
[www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Wild\\_Turkey/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Wild_Turkey/id)

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