Enrichment Rod Instructions
Adapted from instructions by Micala Teetzen, Sedgwick County Zoo, Wichita, KS

General Description: Enrichment rods are simple yet versatile enrichment enhancement devices. Suspending enrichment devices using the rod allows animals to manipulate their “same old” enrichment items in new and different ways. They now spin, flip, or slide the items instead of just rolling them on the ground. The possibilities are endless! Enrichment rods are like a new base item in your wardrobe that goes with everything and thus transforms your whole closet! Go shopping in your own enrichment closet and see those old items with new eyes as rods breathe new life into your existing enrichment collection!

As always, check with your vets and others to be sure the enrichment you make is safe for the animals who will have access to it and suitable for the exhibit where it will be located.

Instructions

STEP 1. Select a rod. The rod can be made of many materials. Here are a few examples.

- metal electrical conduit
- small-diameter, thick-walled (schedule 80) PVC
- a wooden dowel
- a repurposed old tool handle
- a solid metal rod

STEP 2. Cut the rod to desired length, smoothing any rough ends. The rod used in these instructions is a 40” long piece of ½” diameter conduit, which works well for many purposes.

STEP 3. Make a way to hang the rod, for example, drill holes and add eyebolts or zip ties. If using eyebolts, you may need to remove and replace them to remove and load items on the rod. If using zip ties, put the knob inside the tube to make it easier to slide enrichment items on. See Figures 1-4.
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**STEP 4.** Slide on your enrichment items. These can be new items or items you already have in your enrichment collection, such as balls, cubes, tubes, toys, puzzle feeders, etc. Some may need holes drilled in them for use on the rod enrichment device.

**STEP 5.** Hang the device, taking care to ensure that the rod is level so that the items don't all slide to one end or place spacers between the items to keep them at desired locations. Rope, chain, cable, or other suitable materials can also be attached to extend the attachment points as needed.

The large, plastic box shown in Figures 5 and 6 is heavy and hard to manipulate (for keepers and animals). Despite putting many holes in it, most animals still had a hard time getting treats out of it whether it was given loose or suspended by a rope. After putting it on the horizontal rod, it is much easier to manipulate since it takes much less force to move it. It has proven to be successful enrichment for many more species when presented with the rod modification. Figure 6 shows how it can be hung on a different axis on the horizontal rod to make it a completely different puzzle feeder for the animals to solve.
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Below are photos of various animals interacting with new and improved enrichment items.

Figure 7. Note the use of ropes to hang the rod at an appropriate level for the peccaries to manipulate, as there are no places to attach items to the lower section of the walls.

Figure 8. Squirrel monkeys checking out their “new” toys with the rod hung from the top mesh.
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Figure 9. Meerkats looking for crickets in their various puzzle feeders.

Some other puzzle feeder options.

Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12 Spinner bottles

Figure 13 Naturalistic PVC spinners. Holes made at various heights change the difficulty. The middle one is the easiest. Different size holes will also change the difficulty level.
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Figure 14 Whole food items can be speared and hung on the rods for the animals to manipulate.