

Communication Station

Species Focus: Black-tailed Prairie Dog

Intro: Prairie dogs are very social creatures that live in large colonies called prairie dog towns. Within their towns, they have small groups similar to a family called coterie. Living so close to one another, communication is key for this species.

Activity: Measure out 50 feet with a string or a measuring tape. Head outside and have a friend walk to one end of the string or measuring tape, while you stay at the other. Get into the mindset of a prairie dog and experiment with communication across your “town.” First, try different types of sounds, like whistles, shouting, whispering, singing, etc. Then, try movements, such as holding up fingers, arm movements, making faces, and so on. Decide which worked best, then move to a different type of landscape (for example if you started in a grassy area, move into a group of trees) and try the experiment again.

Follow up questions: Which method of communication worked best in this location? If you were a prairie dog, what might you be communicating to your coterie members?