

Houston Zoo at Home

RED PANDAS

Silent Steppers

Ages: 3-7

Red pandas have thick fur covering their entire body, even the soles of their feet! This helps them to conserve body heat in a cold climate, but also to climb on wet, slippery branches and walk on icy rocks or snow-covered ground. Their footsteps are also muffled because of this fur, allowing them to move around quietly within their habitat.

Can you walk silently like a red panda? Try it barefoot first, then see if you can do it with shoes on! What can you find around your home to put on the bottom of your shoes to help you walk quietly? You can try things like an old t-shirt, different types of paper or fabric, foil or wax paper, cotton balls, or even a pillow! Which of these help you be silent, and which have the opposite affect?

Two “Thumbs” Up

Ages: 8-12

Red pandas don't have thumbs like you and I, but instead have what's called a “panda thumb”. Rather than being a movable digit like ours, this “thumb” is just an extension of the wrist bone that helps them grasp fruit and branches, strip leaves from bamboo, and even climb down trees headfirst!

What would life be like if we didn't have thumbs? Find a pair of gloves and tape the thumb slot down. Now put your hand in and try to do things with only your other four fingers! Everyday tasks like eating, picking up toys, building with blocks, and even zipping your backpack can be a whole new challenge. Tying your shoes and writing your name can be almost impossible! Try your hand at these tasks and then give your thumbs a big thank you!

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