

Whales fact file

If you're interested in animals you will love learning about whales: they are unique and extraordinary creatures, and we have more in common with them than you might imagine...

Types

Whales, like us, are mammals. They number around 80 different species, and belong to the animal order *cetecea*, which can be further divided into *baleen* whales and *toothed* whales. Toothed whales outnumber baleens in species. Their teeth are for grabbing and chewing prey, attack and defence, or exhibiting dominance. Cooperating in groups or pods, they hunt, migrate and rear young together. Baleen whales are usually superior in size, with two blowholes rather than one and a baleen palate instead of teeth. They swim with their mouths agape, filter feeding by expelling the water through their gills and retaining food inside their baleen bristles. Their annual migration to warm-water breeding grounds often requires long journeys from cold-water feeding grounds.



How are whales like other mammals?	How are whales special?
They use lungs to breathe air.	A layer of blubber lies under their skin.
They are warm-blooded.	They breathe through a blowhole on their head.
They produce milk to feed their young.	Their bodies have the streamlined form of a fish.
They have some hair.	They have paddle-shaped forelimbs or flippers.



Habitat and diet

Whales can be found in oceans throughout the world, usually dictated by their species. Their diets very much depend on their environments, ranging from microscopic plankton (eaten in vast quantities) to large marine animals.