

# LESSON PLANS

Simple ■ Student Friendly ■ Accessible

## OBJECTIVES

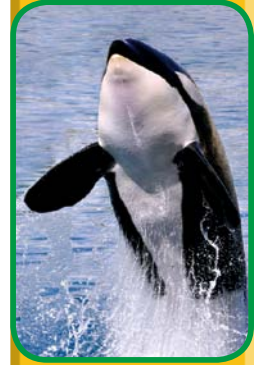
### Students will understand that:

- There are many different kinds of whales
- The main types are baleen whales and toothed whales

## PROCEDURES

- 1 Review with your class what they have learned about whales. Before beginning the activity, students should know that although whales live in water, **they are mammals**. Like all mammals, whales are warm-blooded and breathe air through their lungs.
- 2 Ask your students if they know **what whales eat**. After students have given their ideas, tell them that there are two main types of whales: baleen whales and toothed whales.
- 3 Explain that **baleen whales have no teeth**. Instead, they have hundreds of thin plates in their mouths called baleen. These plates hang from a whale's upper jaw and are made of the same material as human fingernails. Baleen whales eat plankton—masses of tiny plants and animals that drift in the water. The function of baleen is to strain out plankton from the water. There are 10 types of baleen whales, including most of the larger whales.
- 4 Next, explain that **toothed whales have teeth**. Some eat fish, and others eat animals like cuttlefish and squid. Toothed whales do not chew their food, however. Their teeth catch the food, which the whale swallows whole. There are 65 types of toothed whales, including dolphins and porpoises.
- 5 Divide your class into teams to play the whale version of “Who Am I?” Assign each team to research a number of whales—at least one or two for each team member. A starter list:
  - **Baleen whales:** blue whale, gray whale, Sei whale, black right whale, pygmy right whale, fin whale, bowhead whale, minke whale, humpback whale, Bryde's whale
  - **Toothed whales:** sperm whale, killer whale, Baird's beaked whale, pilot whale, narwhal, beluga, dolphin, porpoise, river dolphin
- 6 Have teams divide the whales they have been assigned so that each team member researches the same number. Researchers should amass as much information as possible about their whales. To guide research, suggest students first **classify their whales** as baleen or toothed and then look for information about size, shape, habitat, food, habits, physical characteristics, and color. Each student should write a brief, clear description of his or her whale(s).
  - Give team members each other's research, so that all students on one team are familiar with all the whales described by their teammates.
  - Have each team submit its research in a folder, labeled with some sort of team identification.
- 7 Distribute folders so that each team has another team's research. The members of each team should use the folder they have been given to quiz the team whose identification appears on the folder. A student from the “asking team” will read the description of one of the whales described in the folder and then ask the question “Who Am I?” singling out any member of the “answering team” (the team that generated the research) to answer the question.

### WHALES



GRADES 6-8

# Use *Grzimek's Animal Life* to enhance the lesson

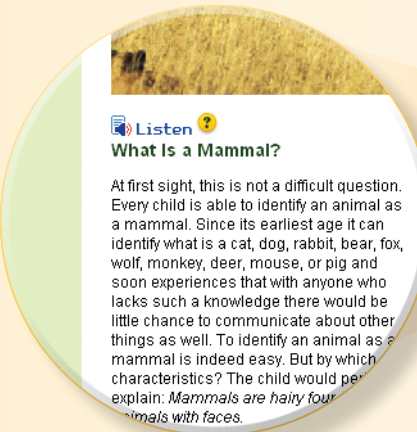
Intuitive, in-depth and easy to access, *Grzimek's Animal Life* supports lesson plans and enhances classroom assignments.

## STEP 1

### Define a mammal

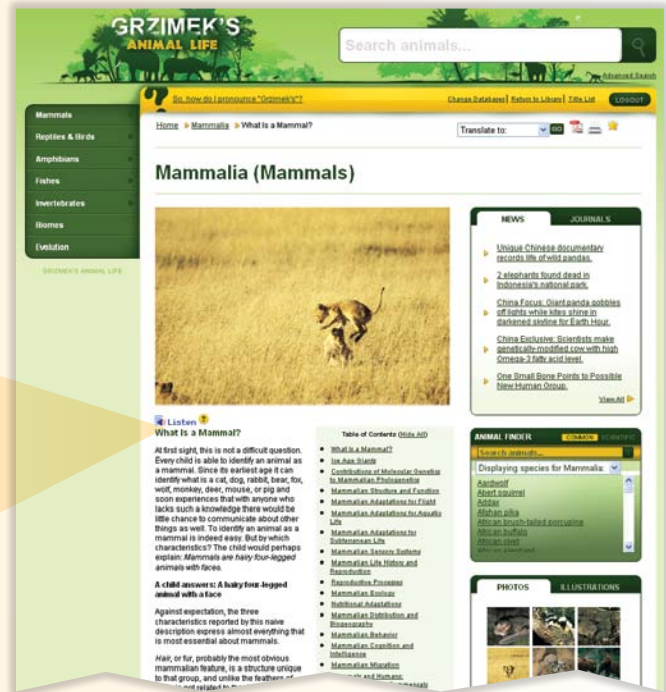
#### Species page

Need to know what a mammal is? Just click on the species page to get all of the information you need and more on mammals, their diets, habitats and more.



**Listen ?**  
**What is a Mammal?**

At first sight, this is not a difficult question. Every child is able to identify an animal as a mammal. Since its earliest age it can identify what is a cat, dog, rabbit, bear, fox, wolf, monkey, deer, mouse, or pig and soon experiences that with anyone who lacks such a knowledge there would be little chance to communicate about other things as well. To identify an animal as a mammal is indeed easy. But by which characteristics? The child would perhaps explain: *Mammals are hairy four-legged animals with faces.*



**GRZIMEK'S ANIMAL LIFE**

Search animals...

Home » Mammalia » What is a Mammal?

Translate to: [dropdown]

### Mammalia (Mammals)

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**A child answers: A hairy four-legged animal with a face.**

Against expectation, the three characteristics reported by this naive description express almost everything that is most essential about mammals.

Hair, or fur, probably the most obvious mammalian feature, is a structure unique to that group, and unlike the feathers of most groups.

**Table of Contents (Order AD)**

- What is a Mammal?
- List of Mammals
- Contributions of Mammals: Specific to Mammalia: Endoskeleton
- Mammalian Skull and Jaws
- Mammalian Adaptations to Land
- Mammalian Adaptations to Aquatic Life
- Mammalian Senses: Hearing
- Mammalian Life History and Reproduction
- Reproductive Systems
- Mammalian Ecology
- Mammalian Distribution and Biogeography
- Mammalian Behavior
- Mammalian Evolution and Phylogeny
- Mammalian Migration
- Mammalian Conservation

**NEWS**

- [Unlucky Chinese documentary records life of wild pandas](#)
- [2 elephants found dead in Indonesia's national park](#)
- [China Focus: Giant panda cubs of birth while sales slump in national parks for Earth Hour](#)
- [China Exclusive: Scientists make genetically modified cow with Dutch Omega-3 fatty acid levels](#)
- [One Small Stone Points to Possible New Human Origin](#)

**ANIMAL INDEX**

Displaying species for Mammalia

**PHOTOS** **ILLUSTRATIONS**

## STEP 2

### They eat what?


#### Feeding detail

Dietary information on every animal is included in each entry. For this lesson, we can easily find out that whales eat small fish and krill.



**Listen ?**  
**Feeding, ecology and diet**

Cetaceans are generally regarded as apex predators, and even the baleen **whales**, which in many respects feed more like grazers than predators, are positioned relatively high on the trophic pyramid. With their specialized feeding apparatus, the baleen whales are all filter feeders although their actual strategies for collecting prey vary. The baleenids and the sei whale are skim feeders, meaning that they tend to swim steadily through the water, mouth open, allowing prey organisms (usually zoo-plankton) to be continuously filtered against the mat of baleen in the throat. It then resumes the feeding process.



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**Table of Contents (Order AD)**

- Introduction
- Evolution and Substrate
- Physical Characteristics
- Distribution
- Habitat
- Behavior
- Feeding, ecology and diet
- Reproductive System
- Conservation Status
- Relationships to Humans

**Order:** Cetacea  
Term not part of (E) taxonomy  
**Common Name:** Whales, dolphins, and porpoises

**NEWS**

- [Endangered whale born near New York](#)
- [An Apology For Selling Whale Meat](#)
- [Discovery's 'settle' Close-up on a wild water shoot](#)
- [Whales can be researched without being killed, scientists](#)
- [Swiss Spot Is Charged With Selling Whale Meat](#)

**ANIMAL INDEX**

Displaying species for Cetacea

**PHOTOS** **ILLUSTRATIONS**

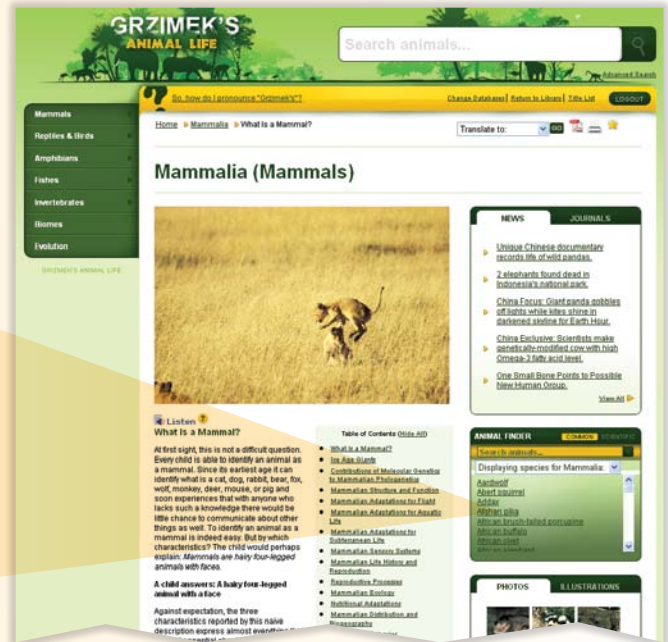


## STEPS 5-7

### Classify the whale

#### Drop-down menu

Students can use the *Grzimek's Animal Life* Animal Finder to view the varieties of whales.



## STEPS 7-8

### Student research made easy

#### Engaging overviews

Animal portal pages make student research easy. The overview articles contain detailed information that provide quick access to essential facts. Scientific classification information is readily available in the facts box on the right of the page. Students will also find photos, videos, an interactive map of where they live, and links to related sites.

