

Is it a Whale?



Objective

Given pictures of various animals, the student will determine which ones are whales. The student will give reasons for their decisions.

Materials

For each student:

- Is It a Whale? Funsheet
- Crayons

Background

Whales are mammals. Characteristics shared with other mammals include the following: Mammals are warm-blooded. That is they maintain a high and constant body temperature independent of the surroundings.

Mammals give live birth. Baby whales, called calves, are born in the water.

Mammals nurse their young. A mother whale's milk is rich in fat, so the calves develop a thick layer of blubber.

Mammals have hair. Although adult whales rarely have hair, young whales may have sparse hairs along the rostrum.

Mammals breathe air. A whale breathes air through nostrils called a blowhole, located on top of the whale's head. When it needs oxygen, a whale surfaces, thrusts its blowhole clear of the water, exhales, and takes a deep breath of air into its lungs.

Although whales live in the sea and have a body shape similar to a fish, whales are not fish. Fish are cold-blooded. That is, a fish's temperature is usually about the same temperature as that of the water it swims in. Most fish have scales.

Action

1. Explain that whales are mammals that live in the sea. Define what a mammal is for your students, using the background information above. Make a list on the board of words that describe whales. Make a second list of words that describe fish. Circle words that are on both lists.
2. Copy and distribute the Is it a Whale? Funsheet.
3. Students will circle the animals that are whales and draw an X through the animals that aren't whales. Remind students to look for blowholes and tail orientation (a fish tail or whale flukes) to help them decide what is a whale and what is a fish.
4. Discuss why each animal is or isn't a whale. Students may color their funsheets.

Is it a Whale?



Name _____

Circle the animals that are whales. Draw an X through animals that are not whales. Can you find the imaginary sea creature?

