

CIRCLE OF LIFE

Life cycle of a Whale



Grow with me



Terrapin



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Gigantic giant

More than sixty-five million years ago, the last of the gigantic dinosaurs disappeared from our planet. But the largest creatures that have ever lived are still found on the earth. They are bigger than the biggest dinosaurs. They spend their whole life in the ocean and are larger than jumbo jets. Who are these creatures?

TAKE CARE —

Whales depend on small shrimp-like animals called krill for food. Humans catch huge quantities of krill for use as feed in fish farms. If there are not enough krill in the oceans, the whales could die of hunger.



Krill



The blue whale may eat up to forty million krill a day.



Let's find out **More...**

A blue whale's tongue is so big that fifty people can stand on it, and a small child can crawl through the chambers of its mighty heart.

Whales! The largest of these huge creatures is the blue whale. It can be a hundred feet long and can weigh 100–150 tonnes, as much as thirty-two elephants! However, though whales live in water, they are not fish. They are ocean mammals who give birth to young ones.

Greats galore!

There are two groups of whales—the smaller whales such as dolphins and the larger baleen whales like the blue, grey, and humpback whales. The smaller whales have teeth. They hunt for food using a special skill called echolocation. They send out sound signals that bounce back after striking the bodies of fish and other sea animals. These signals lead the whales towards their food. The whales then use their teeth to catch and swallow their food.

Let's find out More...

The scientific name for baleen whales, 'mysticetes', comes from a Greek word meaning 'moustache'!



Dolphins are toothed whales with a distinct beak and conical teeth.



Baleen whales do not have teeth. Instead, they have a stiff fringe hanging down from the upper jaw, called baleen. The baleen looks like a comb. When the whale takes a huge gulp of sea water, tonnes of krill and other creatures are trapped by this fringe and then swallowed.



The humpback whale was hunted so much that it almost disappeared from the earth, but laws were made to protect it.



TAKE CARE

Ocean pollution poses a serious threat to whales. Beluga whales in the Hudson Bay in north-eastern Canada are so full of chemicals that when they die and are washed ashore, they are treated as poisonous waste.

Blowing bubbles

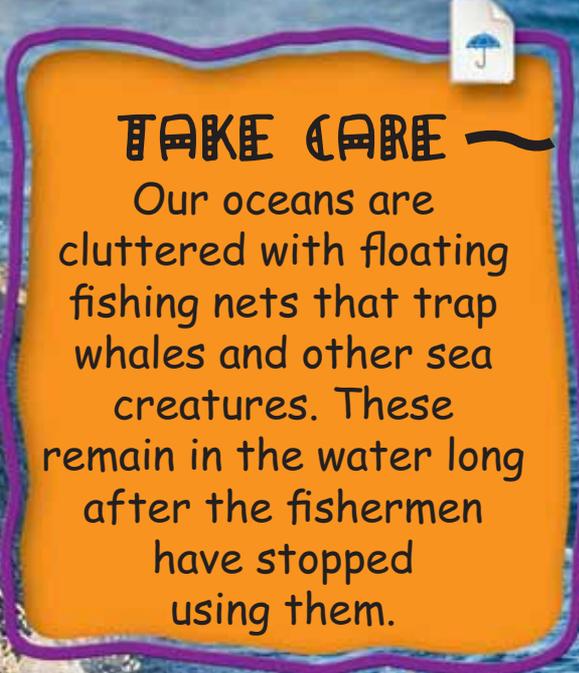
Whales range in size from that of a human being to that of a huge building. Their smooth bodies glide easily through water. The tail end is divided into two paddle-like shapes called flukes. Whales have a blowhole on top of their head. It is like a nostril and is used for breathing.

Let's find out More...

Despite being really huge, baleen whales are able to leap out of the water completely. Humpback whales are particularly good at acrobatics.



A baleen whale has two blowholes on top of its head. With these blowholes, it can send spouts of water up to a height of thirty feet. Smaller whales, on the other hand, have only one blowhole.



TAKE CARE ~

Our oceans are cluttered with floating fishing nets that trap whales and other sea creatures. These remain in the water long after the fishermen have stopped using them.

Calf care

Many whales swim thousands of miles from their icy feeding grounds, just to give birth in warm waters. The mother whale is called a cow and the baby, a calf. Though the calf can swim at birth, the mother and the calf do not like to be separated. The baby needs to stay close to the mother so that it can feed on its mother's milk.

Whales usually have a calf every one to three years. A mother whale looks after it for at least a year, feeding and protecting it.



TAKE CARE

Ships that travel to areas used by whales to give birth must move very slowly. Whales stay near the surface of the ocean while giving birth and are often hit by fast-moving ships.

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