

Sharks

There are more than 500 different species of shark, including the great white shark, grey reef shark, hammerhead shark, tiger shark, blue shark, bull shark and mako shark. Sharks have five to seven gill slits on the sides of their head and pectoral fins that are not attached to their head. Sharks have a layer of dermal denticles all over them that protects their skin from parasites and damage.

Where do they live?

Sharks can be found in every ocean in the world, but are more common in seas with a depth of more than 2,000 metres. Most sharks don't live in freshwater, but there are a few exceptions, like the river shark and the bull shark, who can live in both freshwater and seawater. Most shark attacks happen in Australia, South Africa, America and Brazil.



Grey Reef Shark



School of
Hammerhead
Sharks

Big Facts

1. A group of sharks is called a shoal, school or shiver.
2. Sharks do not have any bones in their bodies! They have a skeleton of cartilage instead, which is the same tough, flexible tissue our human ears and noses are made up of.
3. One of the smallest sharks is the dwarf lantern shark, which is usually only around 17cm in length.
4. The largest fish in the world is the whale shark, which can measure up to a massive 14 metres long!

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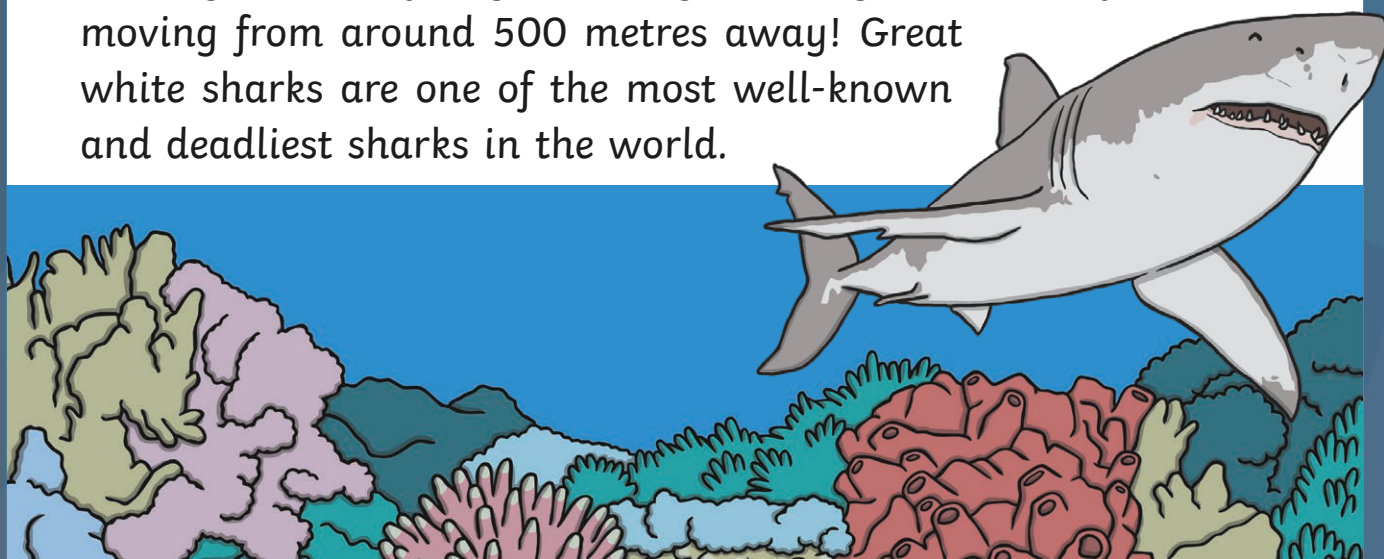
What do they eat?

Although some types of shark can be deadly, only about 12 species have ever been involved in human attacks. Actually it is humans that can be very harmful to sharks as they often illegally hunt them for their meat, organs and skin. This has led to overfishing and means that the great white shark is now an endangered species.

A shark's feeding depends on its species and location. Most sharks are carnivores so they like to eat fish and even other sharks. Some large sharks eat dolphins, sea lions and small whales. Smaller sharks eat molluscs, clams, crabs, squid, lobster and other small aquatic life. Sharks have many rows of replacement teeth, which grow on the inside of their jaws and move forward when needed - they are a bit like a conveyor belt! Great white sharks have 300 sharp triangular teeth and are warm-blooded.

What are they good at?

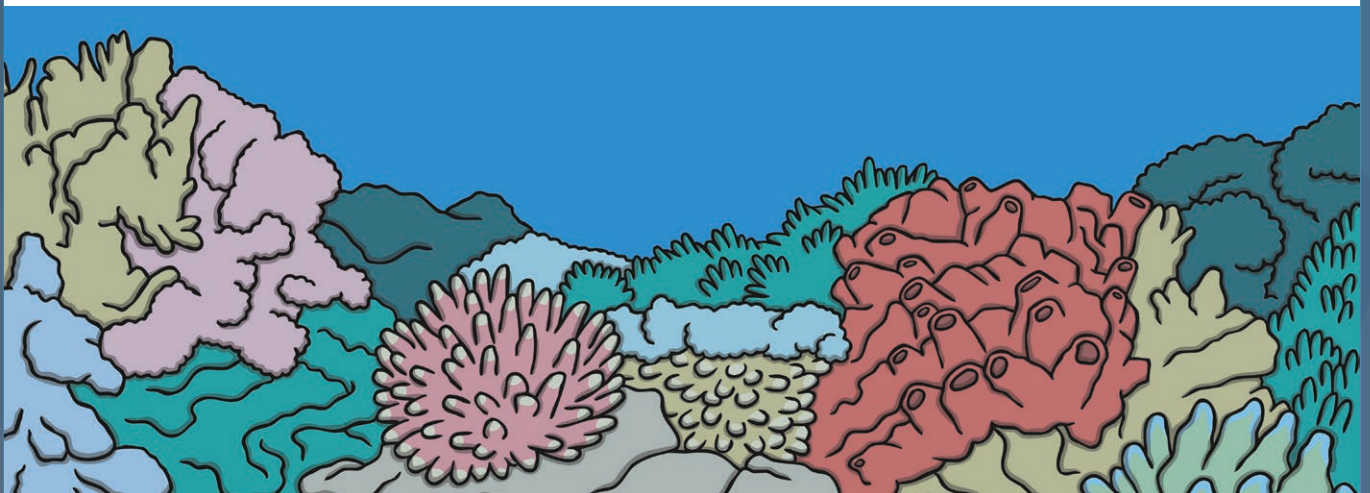
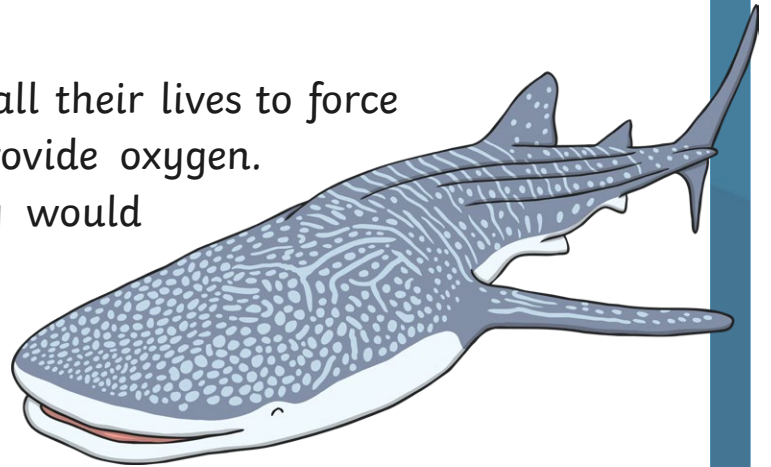
Sharks have incredible senses. Unlike humans, their nostrils are only used for smelling and not breathing. Their sense of smell is so good that they can smell a single drop of blood in the water from up to 400 metres away from them. A shark's hearing is also fairly amazing as they can hear fish moving from around 500 metres away! Great white sharks are one of the most well-known and deadliest sharks in the world.



These predators can swim as fast as 18mph! A baby shark is called a pup. Some types of shark lay eggs on the ocean floor and some give birth to live pups in the ocean. Pups are born already able to take care of themselves. They often have to swim away fast as some mothers try to eat their own pups, or sometimes their own siblings can even attack them!

Amazing Fact!

Some sharks keep swimming all their lives to force water over their gills and provide oxygen. If they stopped moving, they would suffocate and die.



Questions about Sharks

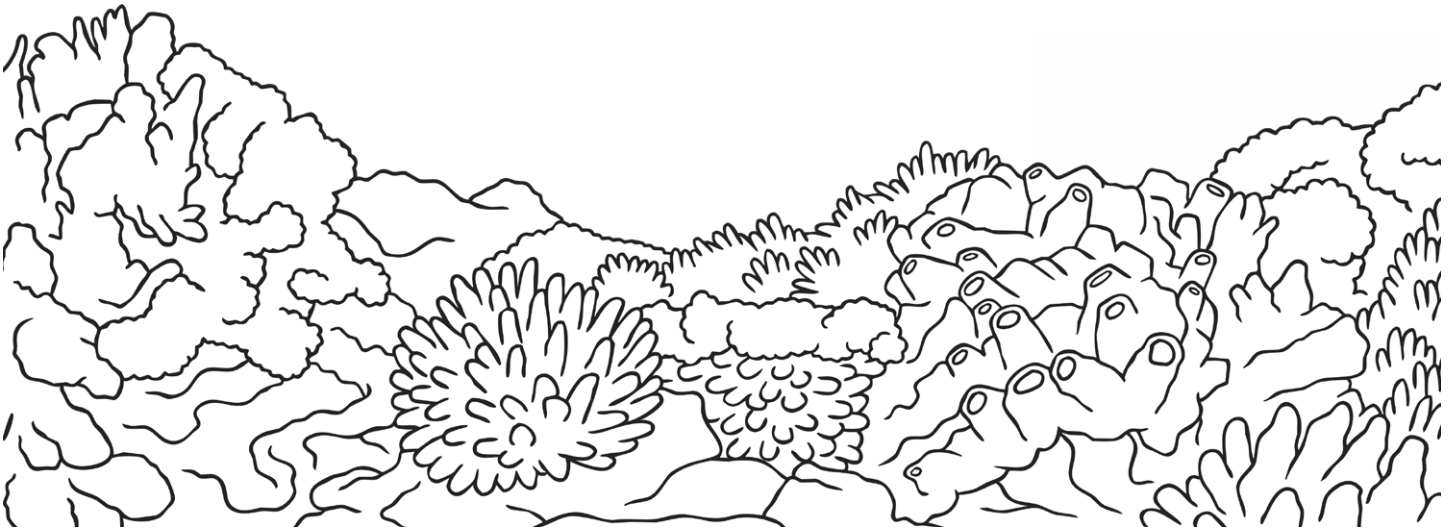
1. What kind of gills, fins and skin do sharks have?

2. Do sharks have bones in their bodies? If not, what do they have instead?

3. How small is the smallest shark and how big is the biggest shark?

4. What kind of water do sharks live in?

5. Why do some sharks have to move all the time and what does this do?



6. What do meat eating and non meat eating sharks eat?

7. What is so useful about sharks' teeth and what are the great white shark's teeth like?

8. Explain three skills some sharks have.

9. Who are sharks' biggest predators?

10. Write your own question to ask a friend about sharks that could be answered by reading this fact file.

