

Sharks

Although a type of fish, a shark's skeleton is made of cartilage. This is the same material that your ears and the tip of your nose are made from. 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 many others. Scientists believe that sharks have resided in our oceans for around 455 million years. Some species of sharks prefer to live alone while others live in groups called a school, shoal or shiver.

The smallest shark is the dwarf lantern shark which is usually around 17cm in length. In comparison, the largest fish in the world is the whale shark, which can measure up to a massive 14 metres long.

Where do they live?

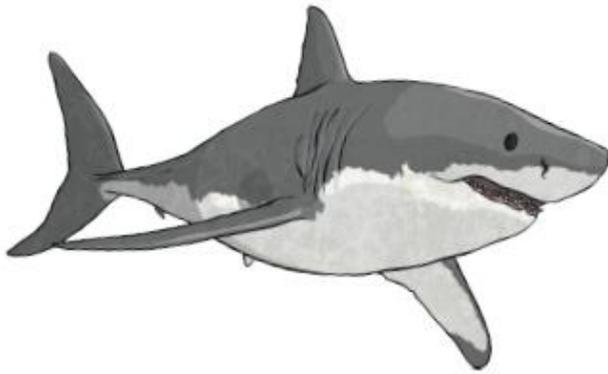
Sharks can be spotted in all of the Earth's five oceans: the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Arctic and Southern. Some sharks can even be found in freshwater lakes and rivers and the bull and river sharks can actually live in both freshwater and seawater. Different species of shark live in different oceans depending on the temperature of the water. Most prefer warmer temperatures although polar sharks prefer colder water.

What do they eat?

A shark's diet depends on its species and where it lives. Most sharks are carnivores because they like to eat fish and other sharks. Some larger sharks eat dolphins, sea lions and small whales. Smaller sharks eat smaller prey such as clams, molluscs, squid, lobster and crabs. Sharks have many replacement teeth, which grow on the inside of their jaws and move forward when needed – a bit like a conveyor belt.

Although some types of shark can be deadly, only about 12 species have ever attacked humans. In fact, shark attacks are actually very rare. More people die from bee stings and natural disasters such as earthquakes and volcanoes each year than shark attacks.

Sharks



Amazing Fact!

Sharks have five to seven gill slits on the sides of their heads. As long as they keep swimming, water keeps moving over their gills, which keeps them alive. Most shark species would die if they stopped moving.

Did You Know...?

Pups (baby sharks) are born already able to take care of themselves. They have to be able to swim away fast as some mothers try to eat their own pups and their own siblings can even attack them.

Shark Senses

Sharks have all the senses that humans have; smell, sight, touch, taste and hearing. The strongest is their sense of smell which is 10 000 times better than a human's. Sharks can smell a single drop of blood in the water from 400 metres away. They can also hear fish moving from around 500 metres away. Sharks have very good eyesight and they can even see in very dim light which allows them to still hunt in deeper waters. As well as having incredible senses, these skilful predators can swim at great speeds; great white sharks can swim as fast as 18mph!