



## Objective

Students will explore behavioral adaptations of some marine mammals.

## Materials

- ❑ SeaWorld Stars animal cards (next 2

## Background

Behavior is the way an animal acts. Animal behaviors are usually strategies for survival in the wild. Marine mammals display numerous behaviors that help them communicate with each other, evade potential predators, reproduce, and to catch prey in their aquatic habitat. The animals are born with some of these behaviors and other behaviors are learned from other members of their species.

At SeaWorld, the marine mammals that participate in shows are only trained to do what they are physically capable of doing. For example, a dolphin cannot ride a bicycle since it has no legs to operate the pedals. However, it can easily leap out of the water propelled by its powerful tail flukes. These natural behaviors are showcased to guests visiting SeaWorld to demonstrate the remarkable behavioral adaptations these animals have for living in the sea.

## Action

1. Copy and cut apart the SeaWorld Stars animal cards.
2. Distribute a different card to each cooperative learning group or to each student.
3. Using the atlas or world map, have the students find the region that their animal is from.
4. Have students learn more about the animals, especially their behaviors, by visiting the school library or researching online at [SeaWorld.org](http://SeaWorld.org) or other websites.
5. Have students bring their notes into class for the discussion.
6. Discuss in class, the concept of animal behavior:
  - Why these behaviors important for these animals?
  - What are some examples of learned behaviors?
  - What are some similarities and differences in behaviors of these animals?
  - Which of these animals can do similar behaviors?



## killer whale

*Orcinus orca*

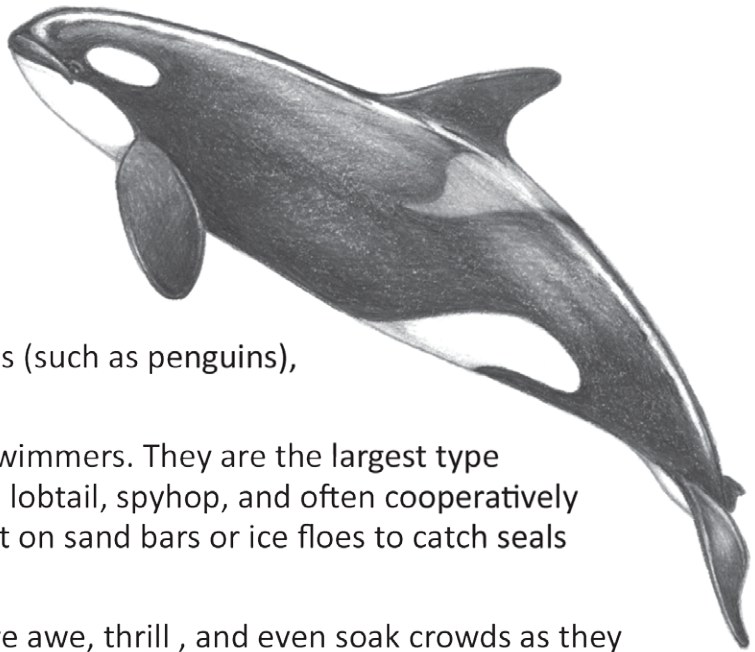
**Size:** Killer whales may reach lengths of 4.9 to 6.7 m (16–22 ft.) and weigh 1,361 to 5,442 kg (3,000–12,000 lb.). Males are much larger than females. Killer whale size and weight can vary between populations.

**Distribution:** oceans worldwide

**Diet:** fishes, marine mammals, seabirds (such as penguins), and squids.

**behavior:** Killer whales are powerful swimmers. They are the largest type of dolphin. Killer whales jump, breach, lobtail, spyhop, and often cooperatively hunt in pods. Sometimes they slide out on sand bars or ice floes to catch seals and penguins.

At SeaWorld, Shamu and friends inspire awe, thrill, and even soak crowds as they demonstrate their adaptations for living in the sea.



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## common bottlenose dolphin

*Tursiops truncatus*

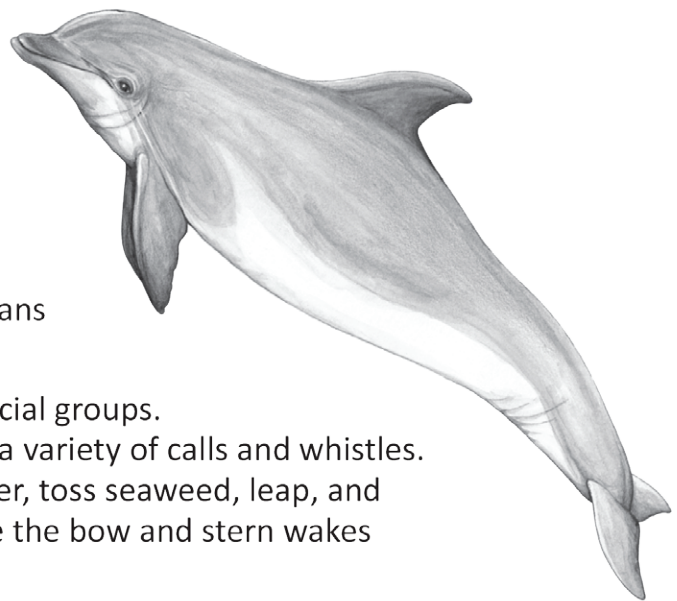
**Size:** Bottlenose dolphins reach lengths of 2 to 3.9 m (6.6–12.8 ft.) and can weigh 150 to 200 kg (331.5–441 lb.). Males are slightly larger than females.

**Distribution:** temperate and tropical oceans worldwide

**Diet:** a variety of fishes, squids, and crustaceans such as shrimp

**Behavior:** Bottlenose dolphins live in fluid social groups. They communicate with each other through a variety of calls and whistles. At sea, bottlenose dolphins chase one another, toss seaweed, leap, and “surf” the ocean swells. Sometimes they ride the bow and stern wakes of boats.

At SeaWorld, bottlenose dolphins jump, splash, and interact with each other and their trainers throughout the day and during shows.



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## California sea lion

*Zalophus californianus*

**Size:** Males may weigh 200 to 400 kg (440–881 lb.) while females are much smaller at 50 to 110 kg (110–242 lb.). In length, males reach 2 to 2.5 m (6.5–8 ft.) and females reach 1.5 to 2 m (5–6.5 ft.).

**Distribution:** British Columbia to western Mexico, including the Gulf of California

**Diet:** fishes, squids, and octopuses

**behavior:** California sea lions are quick and agile in the water, abilities that help them catch prey and escape predators. Their large winglike front flippers and hind flippers provide power for swimming, diving, and jumping onto shore. On land, a sea lion can rotate its hind flippers beneath its body to walk on all fours. Sea lions often call noisily to each other.

At SeaWorld, sea lions swim, bark, dive, leap, and clamber about.



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## short-finned pilot whale

*Globicephala macrorhynchus*

**Size:** Short-finned pilot whales can reach a maximum length of 4 to 5.4 m (13–18 ft.) and weigh between 600 to 3,150 kg (1,320–6,940 lb.). Males are larger than females.

**Distribution:** temperate and tropical oceans worldwide

**Diet:** mostly squid and fishes

**Behavior:** Pilot whales are a kind of dolphin that lives in pods of a few to more than 20 individuals. They leap, breach, and call and whistle to each other. At sea pilot whales often associate with bottlenose dolphins and other whales.

At SeaWorld San Diego, pilot whales swim, leap, and breach alongside their natural companions, the bottlenose dolphins.



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