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# The Dolphin — Intelligent Mammal of the Open Sea

Reading Worksheet — Level F | [tahricteaches.com](http://tahricteaches.com)

The dolphin is one of the most fascinating animals on Earth. Although it lives in the ocean and looks a little like a fish, the dolphin is actually a **mammal**. Like humans, dolphins breathe air, give birth to live young, and feed their babies with milk. There are about 40 different **species** of dolphins, ranging from the small Hector's dolphin, less than 1.5 meters long, to the massive orca, which can grow more than 9 meters in length.

Dolphins are widely regarded as some of the most **intelligent** creatures in the animal kingdom. Scientists have shown that they can solve complex problems, recognize themselves in mirrors, and even use simple tools, such as sponges to **protect** their noses while hunting on the rough seabed. Their large brains and curious **behavior** have made them favorite subjects for marine research around the world.

To navigate the dark and open ocean, dolphins use a special skill called **echolocation**. They send out streams of clicks and listen for the **signal** that bounces back from nearby objects. This allows them to find fish, avoid danger, and even tell the difference between a sandy bottom and a rocky one. Some dolphins can hold their breath for over ten minutes and dive several hundred meters in search of food.

Dolphins are deeply **social** animals. They live in family groups called pods, which can contain anywhere from a few members to several hundred individuals. Within a pod, dolphins **communicate** using a wide range of clicks, whistles, and body movements. Each dolphin even has a unique "signature whistle" that works almost like a name, helping its companions recognize and call it across long distances underwater.

Sadly, many dolphin populations are in trouble today. Pollution, fishing nets, and constant noise from ships make it harder for them to **adapt** and survive. Some species, such as the Yangtze river dolphin, are already considered extinct. Protecting our oceans means protecting these intelligent, social creatures — a responsibility that connects every coast and every country on the planet.

## A. Vocabulary

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|---------------------|--|
| 1. mammal ____      | a. to share information, thoughts, or feelings with others                                 |
| 2. species ____     | b. to change in order to fit a new situation or environment                                |
| 3. intelligent ____ | c. having great mental ability; able to learn and understand quickly                       |
| 4. protect ____     | d. living and interacting in groups rather than alone                                      |
| 5. behavior ____    | e. a sound that bounces back from a surface and is heard again                             |
| 6. echo ____        | f. a warm-blooded animal that breathes air, gives birth to live young, and feeds them with |
| 7. signal ____      | g. a group of similar living things that can reproduce together                            |
| 8. social ____      | h. to keep safe from harm or danger  |
| 9. communicate ____ | i. the way a person or animal acts in different situations                                 |
| 10. adapt ____      | j. a sound, sign, or movement used to send information                                     |

## B. True or False

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1. The dolphin is a mammal that breathes air and feeds its babies with milk. \_\_\_\_
2. There are about 40 different species of dolphins. \_\_\_\_
3. The orca is one of the smallest members of the dolphin family. \_\_\_\_
4. Dolphins can recognize themselves in mirrors. \_\_\_\_
5. Some dolphins use sponges to protect their noses while hunting. \_\_\_\_
6. Dolphins use echolocation to navigate and find food. \_\_\_\_
7. Each dolphin has a unique signature whistle that works like a name. \_\_\_\_
8. Dolphins always live alone and avoid other dolphins. \_\_\_\_
9. Pollution and fishing nets threaten dolphin populations today. \_\_\_\_

## C. Fill in the Blanks

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**Word Bank:** adapt, intelligent, communicate, echo, species

1. There are about 40 different \_\_\_\_\_ of dolphins in the world's oceans.
2. Dolphins are widely regarded as some of the most \_\_\_\_\_ creatures in the animal kingdom.
3. To navigate the dark ocean, dolphins use a special skill called \_\_\_\_\_ location.
4. Inside a pod, dolphins \_\_\_\_\_ using clicks, whistles, and body movements.
5. Pollution and fishing nets make it harder for dolphins to \_\_\_\_\_ and survive.

## D. Comprehension Questions

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1. Why is the dolphin classified as a mammal, even though it lives in the ocean?
2. What evidence shows that dolphins are highly intelligent animals?
3. Explain how echolocation works and what it allows dolphins to do.

4. Describe how dolphins communicate and live together in pods.
5. What are the main threats to dolphins today, and what can we do to help them?

### **E. Discussion Questions**

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1. Some scientists argue that dolphins are nearly as intelligent as humans and should have legal rights. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. Is it ethical to keep dolphins in zoos or marine parks? What are the strongest arguments for and against?
3. If you could design one new rule to protect dolphins and their ocean home, what would it be and why?

# Answer Key

## The Dolphin — Intelligent Mammal of the Open Sea

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**A. Vocabulary:** 1-f, 2-g, 3-c, 4-h, 5-i, 6-e, 7-j, 8-d, 9-a, 10-b

**B. True/False:** 1-T, 2-T, 3-F, 4-T, 5-T, 6-T, 7-T, 8-F, 9-T

**C. Fill Blanks:** 1-species, 2-intelligent, 3-echo, 4-communicate, 5-adapt

**D. Comprehension:**

1. The dolphin is classified as a mammal because, like other mammals, it breathes air, gives birth to live young, and feeds its babies with milk.
2. Dolphins can solve complex problems, recognize themselves in mirrors, and use simple tools such as sponges to protect their noses while hunting on the seabed.
3. Echolocation works by sending out clicks and listening for the echoes that bounce back from objects, allowing dolphins to find food, avoid danger, and tell different surfaces apart in dark water.
4. Dolphins live in pods of a few to several hundred members and communicate through clicks, whistles, and body movements, with each dolphin having a unique signature whistle that works like a name.
5. The main threats are pollution, fishing nets, and noise from ships. We can help by reducing ocean pollution, supporting marine reserves, and pushing for safer fishing practices worldwide.

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