Animal facts for kids: 20 animals and one surprising fact each

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Twenty animals to start with, each with one fact worth reading aloud, then five numbers with their sources. Plus a quiz, fact cards and a size game.

The best animal facts for kids are short, true and a little surprising, so here are twenty animals with the one fact I'd read aloud first. Each one is a "wow" fact from that animal's page on Peabody. I wrote them by hand, in plain words, and left numbers out of them on purpose. Numbers get their own section below, with a source beside every one.

Twenty animals, one fact each

- Animal: Cheetah · The fact: A cheetah can't roar. It purrs, and it makes a chirp like a bird.
- Animal: Lion · The fact: Lion cubs are born with spots, which fade as they grow.
- Animal: Tiger · The fact: A tiger's stripes are on its skin too, not just its fur.
- Animal: African elephant · The fact: An elephant's trunk has no bones at all.
- Animal: Giraffe · The fact: A giraffe has the same number of neck bones as you.
- Animal: Blue whale · The fact: It has no teeth: it eats with baleen, like a giant sieve.
- Animal: Great white shark · The fact: A great white keeps growing new teeth its whole life.
- Animal: Emperor penguin · The fact: The dad keeps the egg warm on his feet all winter.
- Animal: Hummingbird · The fact: Hummingbirds can fly backwards.
- Animal: Gray wolf · The fact: Every pet dog came from wolves, long, long ago.
- Animal: Polar bear · The fact: Under its white-looking fur, a polar bear's skin is black.
- Animal: Red kangaroo · The fact: A newborn joey is no bigger than a jellybean.
- Animal: Giant Pacific octopus · The fact: It has three hearts.
- Animal: Honey bee · The fact: Bees tell each other where flowers are by dancing.
- Animal: Three-toed sloth · The fact: Green algae grow in a sloth's fur.
- Animal: Western gorilla · The fact: Every gorilla has its own nose print, like a fingerprint.
- Animal: Giant panda · The fact: Pandas bleat like lambs.
- Animal: Koala · The fact: Koalas have fingerprints that look a lot like yours.
- Animal: Axolotl · The fact: It can regrow legs, a tail, and even parts of its heart.
- Animal: Bottlenose dolphin · The fact: A dolphin sleeps with half of its brain awake.

These are my picks of twenty to start with, not a ranking of anything. Every one of them has a page with three reading levels (Little, Middle and Big), a line to hear read aloud, three-box questions at the bottom and a card you can print.

Five facts with numbers, and where they came from

A number is only a fact if you can say where it came from. These five are from Peabody's pages, and each source was read and checked on 30 October 2026.

- Animal: Blue whale · The number: up to 33.5 m (110 ft) long · Where it came from: NOAA Fisheries
- Animal: Giraffe · The number: 5.5 m (18 ft) standing height · Where it came from: Wikidata, from its cited reference
- Animal: Peregrine falcon · The number: 200 mph (322 km/h) in a dive · Where it came from: National Park Service, Denali and Yukon-Charley Rivers
- Animal: Giant Pacific octopus · The number: lives 3 to 5 years · Where it came from: NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Fisheries Science Center
- Animal: Hummingbird · The number: weighs 3 to 3.5 g (0.11 to 0.12 oz) · Where it came from: US Fish and Wildlife Service

If no page I trust gives a number, the page says "no checked number yet." The three-toed sloth is a good example: its page has a gap on every line, and I'd rather leave the gap than fill it from memory. The guide Where do the numbers come from? explains how I choose sources.

Three ways to use them with a child

Play whose fact is it? The Whose fact is it? quiz shows three true facts, and only one is about the animal in the question. It's built from the same facts as the table.

Pick one and ask how we'd find out. Read the octopus fact aloud, then open the octopus page together and look for the source. A child who learns to ask "says who?" about a fun fact has learned something bigger than the fact.

See the size. Facts feel different when you can see the animal. Compare Two stands any two animals side by side at true size beside a drawn child, and the size sorter turns that into a game.

Questions grown-ups ask

Are these facts checked?

The wow facts are hand-written, in words, with no numbers in them. Every number on an animal page has a source and a checked date. I look at Wikidata first, then US government pages such as the National Park Service and NOAA Fisheries, and the Smithsonian's National Zoo last.

Are there any fights or gore?

No. Peabody says what an animal eats in plain words and never how it gets it. The race page races animals by speed only and never shows fights.

What if my child is very young?

Every page starts with a short line of about a dozen words, then three reading levels. The Little level is only a few short sentences, and every page can be read aloud.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, with no ads and no sign-up on the animal pages. When the facts are done, the library has stories to read next, and I wrote up the printable fact cards separately.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/animal-facts-for-kids