How big is a blue whale compared to a human? Drawn to scale

Peabody blog · Science · updated 2026-10-30

A blue whale is up to 33.5 m (110 ft) long, says NOAA Fisheries. See it drawn beside a child and an Asian elephant at true relative size, with sources.

A blue whale is up to 33.5 metres (110 feet) long, according to NOAA Fisheries, so it would take almost 28 of the 1.2-metre (4-foot) child Peabody draws beside its animals, head to toe, to match the longest one. That's a lot of children. Here is how I'd picture it, with the numbers and where they came from.

The blue whale in numbers

NOAA Fisheries is the source for all four of these. I read them off its blue whale page and checked them on 30 October 2026.

- Length · Blue whale: 33.5 m (110 ft), a maximum, for Antarctic blue whales
- Weight · Blue whale: 150 tonnes (150,000 kg, about 330,000 lb)
- Top speed · Blue whale: 32 km/h (20 mph), swimming
- How long it lives · Blue whale: 80 to 90 years, an estimated average in the wild

Notice the word "maximum." Not every blue whale is that long. It's the biggest figure the page gives, and Peabody keeps the note beside the number so nobody reads it as typical.

Compared to a human

Peabody doesn't have a checked number for people, and I won't make one up. The ruler instead is the drawn child, 1.2 m tall, and she stands on every stage beside the animals. Divide 33.5 by 1.2 and you get nearly 28.

Better still, try it with a real child. Measure out 33.5 m (110 ft) in a park or a long driveway and chalk both ends. Then take turns lying down head to toe along the line. When the children run out, you'll see how much whale is left.

Beside an Asian elephant, a giraffe and a shark

A child is a good ruler, but an elephant is a better picture. Compare Two stands the blue whale beside any animal that has a checked size. Here are three, each with Peabody's own line for the pair.

- Beside the blue whale: Asian elephant · Its size and source: 1.8 to 3.8 m (5.9 to 12 ft) at the shoulder, 2,750 to 5,420 kg (about 6,100 to 12,000 lb); the Smithsonian's National Zoo · Peabody's pair page says: The whale is about 10 times as long and weighs about 35

times as much.
• Beside the blue whale: Giraffe · Its size and source: 5.5 m (18 ft) standing height; Wikidata, from its cited reference · Peabody's pair page says: The whale is about 6 times as long.
• Beside the blue whale: Great white shark · Its size and source: 6.1 m (20 ft) long, 1,810 kg (about 4,000 lb); NOAA Fisheries · Peabody's pair page says: The whale is about 5 times as long and weighs about 85 times as much.

Peabody sizes the elephant by its height at the shoulder, because the zoo's page gives a height and not a length, so the "10 times" is a whale's length against an elephant's shoulder. You can see exactly how it's drawn on Asian elephant vs blue whale, blue whale vs giraffe and blue whale vs great white shark.

There's a surprise in the shark pair. The shark is the faster swimmer: 56 km/h (35 mph) from NOAA Science On a Sphere, against the whale's 32 km/h (20 mph). Big isn't the same as fast.

Biggest by weight, and by length

Peabody's blue whale page calls it the biggest animal that has ever lived. By weight, the numbers Peabody has back that up. By length there is a wrinkle. The Smithsonian's educator guide gives Argentinosaurus, a long-necked dinosaur, as more than 36.6 m (120 ft), and calls that a scientists' estimate. It puts the dinosaur's weight at up to 100,000 kg, also an estimate, which is lighter than the whale. Stand them side by side on Argentinosaurus vs blue whale and see. I get into the whole question in the biggest animal in the world.

What a whale this size eats

Very small things. Peabody's page says a blue whale has no teeth and eats with baleen, like a giant sieve, and what it sieves is krill, tiny shrimp-like animals, by the mouthful. It's a mammal, so it breathes air through two blowholes on top of its head, and its calls are among the loudest sounds any animal makes. The page also says blue whales are in danger (Endangered on the IUCN Red List), that whaling once made them very rare, and that since it stopped they have slowly started to come back.

Questions grown-ups ask

Is the blue whale bigger than a dinosaur?

By weight, yes, on the figures Peabody has. By length, one dinosaur's estimate is a little longer. That's why I say "biggest" with the word "weight" next to it.

How long do blue whales live?

NOAA Fisheries gives 80 to 90 years as an estimated average in the wild.

How do I show a young child how big that is?

Use the chalk line above, or open Compare Two and tap the blue whale and any animal they know. The picture does the explaining, and every box is read aloud.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, with no ads and no sign-up on the animal pages. When you've seen enough whale, the library has stories to read next. The sources are the NOAA Fisheries blue whale page and the Smithsonian's National Zoo Asian elephant page.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/how-big-is-a-blue-whale-compared-to-a-human