How to write an animal report: a one-page plan for kids

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How to write an animal report on one page: eight short parts, the five numbers to look up, how to name your source, and a free printable fact card to start from.

Write an animal report on one page in eight short parts: the animal, where it lives, what it eats, five numbers, three facts, how it's doing, a comparison, and where you found it all. I built Peabody's animal pages so that every part has a place to start, and so every number says where it came from. That second job is the one most animal reports skip.

The eight parts

1. Meet the animal. Its name, a drawing, and what kind of animal it is: a mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, or an animal with no backbone.
2. Where it lives. The kind of place (rainforest, ocean, desert) and where on Earth.
3. What it eats. One sentence.
4. Five numbers. How long it is, how tall, how heavy, how fast, and how long it lives.
5. Three facts. The ones that made your child say "no way".
6. How it's doing. Peabody puts this in three words: doing fine, needs help, or in danger.
7. Compare it. One sentence about how it measures up to another animal.
8. Where I found it. Your sources.

The five numbers, for a real animal

Take the gray wolf. Peabody has all five numbers for it, and they all come from one National Park Service page about Yellowstone's wolves:

- Number: How long · Gray wolf: 1.81 m (5.9 ft) · The note that goes with it: average
- Number: How tall at the shoulder · Gray wolf: 77 to 81 cm (2.5 to 2.7 ft) · The note that goes with it: average
- Number: How heavy · Gray wolf: 41 to 50 kg (90 to 110 lb) · The note that goes with it: average
- Number: How fast · Gray wolf: 56.3 km/h (35 mph) · The note that goes with it: top speed on land, running
- Number: How long it lives · Gray wolf: 4 to 5 years · The note that goes with it: average in Yellowstone

Keep the note with the number. The lifespan is "average in Yellowstone", so the report should say "Wolves in Yellowstone live 4 to 5 years on average", not "wolves live 4 to 5 years". Notes like "males", "up to", "in the wild" and "in human care" change what a number means. The

saltwater crocodile's 6.1 m (20 ft) is a maximum, not a typical adult, according to a US Fish and Wildlife Service rule in the Federal Register. A report that leaves out "a maximum" is easy to misread.

How to name a source

A source answers three questions: who said it, which page, and the day you looked. For the wolf numbers that's:

> National Park Service, Yellowstone wolf facts (nps.gov/articles/yellowstone-wolf-facts.htm), looked at 30 October 2026.

A first grader can write "Source: National Park Service". By fourth grade a child can write the whole line. Every number on Peabody has a small mark you tap to see its source and the day someone checked it, so the habit of looking is built in. The National Park Service page is the one the wolf numbers came from. Peabody's guide to where the numbers come from explains the order we look in: Wikidata, then United States government pages, then the Smithsonian's National Zoo.

When there is no number

Some animals have gaps. For the three-toed sloth, Peabody says "no checked number yet" for all five numbers, because none of our sources gave one. A good report can say so: "I couldn't find a number I could trust." That's real research, and it's better than a guess.

A model paragraph

> The gray wolf is a mammal that lives and travels in a pack. An average gray wolf is about 1.81 m (5.9 ft) long and weighs 41 to 50 kg (90 to 110 lb). Wolves in Yellowstone live 4 to 5 years on average. (National Park Service)

Notice what it does: a kind, two numbers with their notes, and a source in brackets.

Start from a fact card

Peabody's free printable fact cards have the drawing, the size, weight, top speed and lifespan with their sources, three facts and how the animal is doing in the wild, two cards to a page. Print a card for your child's animal and keep it beside the report as a checklist. Then use Compare Two for part seven: the coyote against the gray wolf draws both at true size beside a child. The guide to writing an animal report has more.

Questions grown-ups ask

Can my child copy the words from the Peabody page?

I'd ask for their own words. Each animal page has three reading levels, so have your child read the Middle one, close the tab and write what they remember. The numbers can be used as they are, with their notes and their source. The sentences should be your child's.

What if two websites give different numbers?

Both may be right. One may give the biggest ever measured and another a typical adult, or one may be about males and the other about all of them. Report one number with its note, or both with their sources, and say why they differ.

What grade is this for?

The plan stretches. A first grader can do a drawing, the kind, the home and one number. A fifth grader can do all eight parts with notes and a full source line. Your child's teacher's rubric comes first, so use this as the scaffold underneath it.

Peabody (peabody.kids) is free through the end of 2026, with no ads. When the report is handed in, the library has stories to read next.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/how-to-write-an-animal-report