



# ENROLL **TODAY!**

## ORLD OF WONDER Exploring the realms of history, science, nature and technology SHARKS

The tiger shark is a nocturnal predator and scavenger with keen eyesight and sense of smell. It will eat just about anything - including humans. It is named for the tigerlike stripes of juveniles.

#### Some basics

Sharks are closely related to skates and rays and are cartilaginous. Cartilaginous fish have a skeleton made of cartilage instead of bone. Cartilage is a strong, flexible material - human noses and earlobes are made of this

> Female great whites are about twice as large as males.

Sharks are fish, but special and unique fish. There are about 450 species of sharks found in waters all over the world. One of the oldest vertebrates on Earth, the shark has existed for 400 million years.

The whale shark, the largest of sharks and the largest fish in the world, survives primarily on plankton (tiny ocean animals)

> There are three sharks that feed mostly on plankton.

> > Thresher

shark

Human

Whale shark The basking shark swims with its mouth

open, feeding on plankton.

**Basking shark** 

The megamouth is a deep-water shark that eats plankton.

**Megamouth shark** 

In Europe, the spiny dogfish is Spiny dogoften eaten as fish shark

'fish and chips.'

Mouth closed

The great white

shark is one of the largest, most fearsome predators in the ocean. It hunts on the surface of the water and bangs into its prey while taking a big bite. It has several rows of teeth that can number into the thousands.

#### Did you know?

Most sharks can detect blood and animal odors from many miles away. Chum is a mix of fish blood and guts used to attract sharks.

Sharks don't blink.

Small, toothlike scales cover a shark's body, making the skin of a shark very rough. Dried shark skin was once used as sandpaper.

Most fish have a swim bladder, an organ that helps them maintain certain depths. Sharks don't. They have a large liver filled with oil that is lighter than water. This helps sharks float a little, but most need to swim constantly, or they will sink.

Sharks never get cancer, so they are being studied with the hope of developing cancerfighting drugs.

### Feeding frenzy

Sharks are carnivores (meat eaters). Most sharks eat fish (often other sharks), squid and octopus. Larger sharks, like the great white, eat just about anything: seals, turtles, small whales, garbage and (rarely) humans. Shark feeding behavior is stimulated when three or more sharks show up for a meal. They can become very excited and vicious, attacking not only the food, but each other. This is called a feeding frenzy.

Great white shark Shark sense Sharks have highly developed senses. In addition to taste, touch, sight, smell and hearing, sharks also have an electrical sense that can detect small electric signals of prey. Sharks can also detect vibrations made by animals moving through the water using a sense called distant touch.

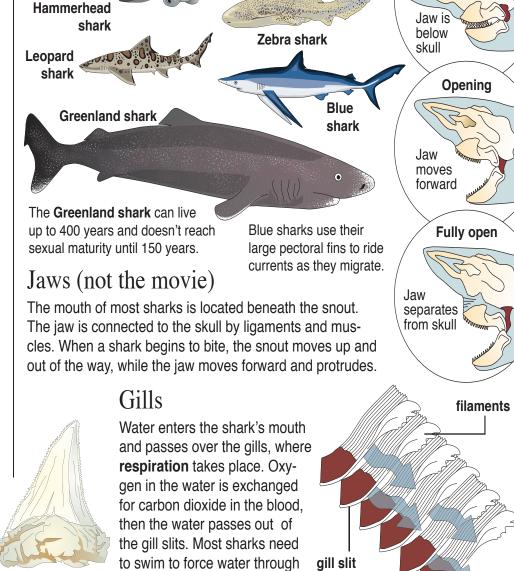
Poor parenting

One of the ways that sharks differ from most fish is that sharks fertilize their eggs inside the mother. Some sharks then lay the eggs outside the body, but most give birth to live young. Sharks have long pregnancies, averaging between 9 to 12 months. Baby sharks are called **pups**. Sharks do not look after their young, and some even eat their babies. Pups begin to swim and hunt almost immediately after birth.

#### Teeth

Sharks have several rows of teeth; many have five to 15 rows. Some sharks have as many as 3,000 teeth at one time. New teeth move forward to replace old or lost ones. A missing tooth can be replaced in about 24 hours. Most sharks do not chew their food very much - instead, they swallow large chunks whole.

SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia. World Book Inc.; https://www.britannica.com; https://www.worldwildlife.org; https://oceana.org; https://www.sharktrust.org;



Sand tiger

shark

#### Scary stats

Sharks are born predators, but they are not really man-eaters. With almost 8 billion people on Earth, there are only about 80 shark attacks each year. About a fourth of those attacks are fatal. Humans are much more dangerous to sharks: 30 million to 100 million sharks are killed by people each year, and 80 shark species face extinction. Large sharks are suffering the most from overhunting. Some countries, including the United States, have made laws to protect sharks.

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their mouths and over their gills.



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