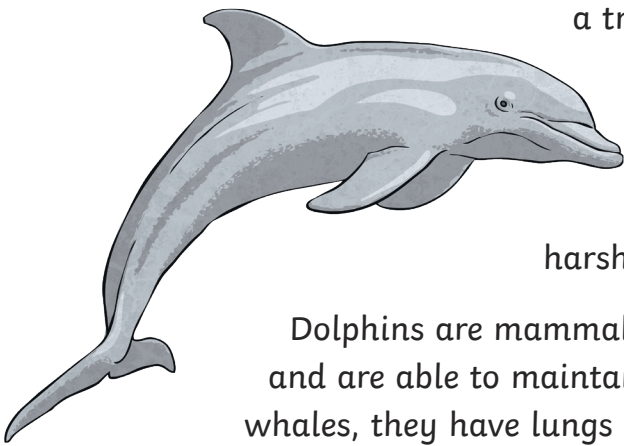


# Dolphins

## What Do Dolphins Look Like?

A dolphin is a marine animal that is part of the whale family.

Dolphins have smooth, rubbery skin and are usually a mixture of black, white and grey in colour. They have two fins on their sides, a triangular fin on their back and a tail.



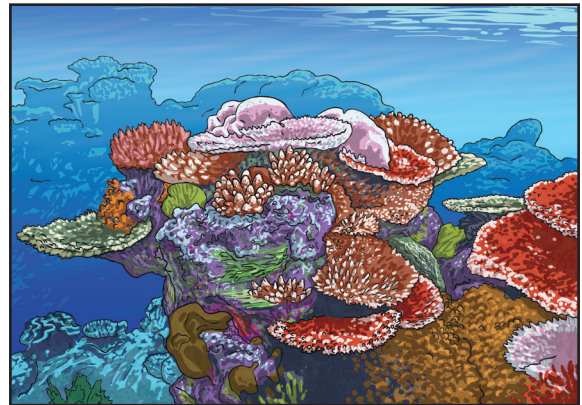
A dolphin's tail is horizontal unlike fish. Like other whales, they have an insulating layer of fat under the skin called blubber to protect them in the harsh cold of the freezing seas.

Dolphins are mammals, not fish, so they are warm-blooded and are able to maintain their body temperature. Like other whales, they have lungs and breathe through a single nostril called the blowhole which is located on the top of their head.

## Where Do Dolphins Live?

Dolphins live in the world's seas, oceans and rivers. They like to be with other dolphins, living together in groups called pods. In the wild, bottlenose dolphin pods are formed based on age, sex and family relationships. This could be mothers and their newborns or most recent offspring, a mix of male and female young dolphins and adult males either alone or in pairs. Dusky dolphins, commonly found off the coast of New Zealand, have been known to create superpods of over a thousand dolphins, due to being so well fed.

Some dolphin pods like to live in coastal areas while others choose to live in shallow waters away from the coast or further out to sea.



## Hunting Behaviour

Bottlenose dolphins are unique hunters - they hunt their prey by swimming around fish in large circles while beating their tails down hard to stir up the shallow silt (sea floor), making the water murky. The lead dolphin continues to do this, making the circle smaller and smaller, eventually trapping the fish like in a net. As the fish leap out of the circle to escape, the other dolphins catch them in their mouths.



A bottlenose dolphin can jump out of the water as high as 4.9 metres from the surface and can flip over onto their back, belly or side. This is known as breaching. They breach for many reasons, including to let other dolphins know there is food nearby.

