

Wolves

A non-fiction text



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What are wolves?



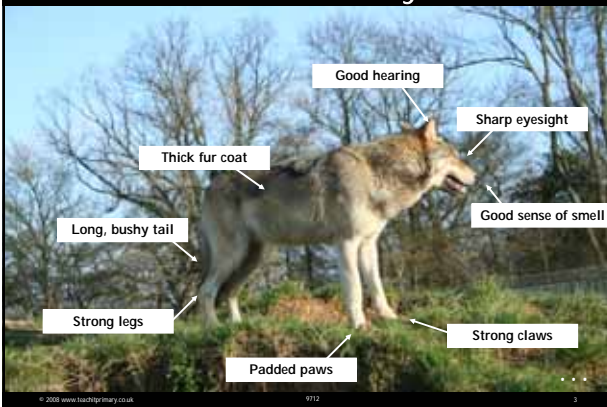
- Wolves are large wild dogs.
- Wolves have long legs and a long, bushy tail.
- They have a coat of thick fur on their bodies.
- Male wolves are between 1.5 and 2 metres long from nose to tail and about 75cm tall.
- Female wolves are a little smaller.

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A wolf's body



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Species of wolf

- There are two species of wolves: Grey Wolves and Red Wolves.
- Grey wolves are not always grey! They can be grey, brown, black or even white.
- Red wolves have shorter, redder hair.
- Both types of wolves are endangered species. Most do not live in the wild any more but in special areas protected by people.

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Where do wolves live?



- Wolves can live in a variety of different places.
- Their habitat must provide a supply of water, food and a safe place to have babies.
- Wolves prefer to have some area for them to rest and shelter in, usually bushes or trees.
- They prefer to avoid areas where there are too many people.
- Wolves today live mainly in North America, Asia, the Middle East and parts of Europe. The white wolf lives in the Arctic.

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Living in a pack



- Although wolves like to do some things alone they are very social creatures and spend most of their time living together in a group.
- A group of wolves is called a pack. It is a family group, usually made up of two parents and their young. Sometimes an aunt or uncle is also present.
- Every wolf has a particular place in the pack called a rank. They know who is above them and who is below them.

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Who's who in a wolf pack?



- The two parent wolves are called the **alpha** pair. They are the dominant or top-ranking wolves in the pack.
- The other wolves show them respect and often do what they want.
- The next most important wolves are the **beta** wolves. These are usually wolves that are 1-3 years old.
- The pups of the pack come below their older brothers and sisters.

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What do wolves eat?

- Wolves are carnivores. They eat meat.
- Wolves mainly eat large animals such as deer, moose and bison. These give the pack lots of food!
- They can also eat smaller **prey** such as beavers, rabbits and squirrels and sometimes even fish!
- If they can't find live prey wolves will eat dead animals they find.

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How do wolves hunt?



- To catch animals that are larger and stronger than themselves wolves hunt in groups.
- They work together to chase, catch and kill the prey. The alpha male tells them what to do.
- They usually hunt at night. They run silently in **single file** and sneak up on the animal.
- As soon as they catch it they eat it until there is nothing left. This is because they don't know when they will get their next meal.

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Wolf pups



- The alpha pair in a pack usually stay together for life. Each year they mate and have a new litter of baby wolves called pups.
- The pups grow in the mother for two months and then they are born. There are usually 2-6 pups.
- All wolf pups are born with dark fur and blue eyes but this changes as they get older.
- They are born in a safe place called a den. The mother feeds them milk and the other wolves bring her food.
- They first leave the den when they are a month old and the whole pack helps to keep them safe. The adults feed the pups after they have hunted by **vomiting** meat for the pups to eat!

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How do wolves communicate?

- Wolves **communicate** in lots of different ways.

• They make sounds to tell each other things e.g. whimpers, growls, barks, whines and pants.

• A wolf's most famous sound is the howl. A wolf usually howls when it is lost and trying to find its pack or when it is trying to attract a mate.

• The whole pack may howl together to tell other wolves to keep away.



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How else do wolves communicate?



• Wolves use parts of their body to say things.

• Sometimes pups wag their tails when they want to play.

• Wolves use their ears too. They put them flat to say sorry and point them forward if they are cross.

• Wolves use their sense of smell a lot too. They can smell the urine scent marks of other wolves and can tell all about that wolf!

• They often say hello by licking another wolf's mouth and nose.

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Glossary

- [Alpha](#) - the dominant (one in charge) male or female
- [Beta](#) - wolves below the alpha pair
- [Communicate](#) - pass on a message
- [Endangered species](#) - animals in danger of becoming extinct (dying out)
- [Habitat](#) - a place where an animal lives
- [Prey](#) - animal that is hunted and eaten as food
- [Rank](#) - place in an order
- [Single-file](#) - in a line one after the other
- [Vomiting](#) - being sick!

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