

*Immerse your class in a study of one of our most popular marine animals... the dolphin. Everyone will enjoy learning about the intelligent, friendly, and playful dolphin! Teach kids about our oceans, rich with plants and animals, and focus on the delightful dolphin to provide a glimpse of life in the sea.*

### *Dolphins Are Mammals*

Dolphins are playful, friendly, and intelligent creatures that seem to be a favorite of everyone who sees them. Along with their close relatives the baleen whales and porpoises, dolphins are part of a group of mammals called *cetaceans*. Although they live in the ocean and look like fish, dolphins are warm-blooded, breathe air with their lungs, are born alive, and feed their young with milk produced in the mother's

body. With pectoral flippers to help them steer, a dorsal fin to provide balance, and powerful tail fins called flukes to propel them, dolphins slide quickly and easily through the water. A dolphin moves its flukes up and down to swim while a fish moves its tail from side to side. A layer of fat called blubber lies just beneath the dolphin's rubbery skin. The blubber keeps the dolphin warm, acts as a storage place for food, and helps it stay afloat. The blowhole on top of the dolphin's head is really a nostril which closes when the dolphin is under water and opens to breathe when it surfaces. Actually small toothed whales, dolphins range from four to 30 feet in length and are found in oceans all over the world. Their sharp, cone-shaped teeth—as many as 200—are used to grasp fish and squid. As soon as the dolphin catches a fish, it turns it around and swallows it head-first. It is believed that dolphins can live to be 30 years old, but since they spend most of their life underwater, much about them is still a mystery.

### *Dolphin Kin*

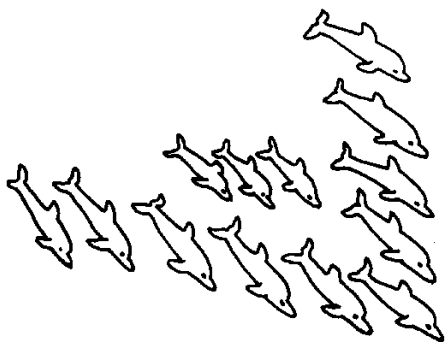
There are many different kinds of dolphins...25 saltwater species and five freshwater species. Believe it or not, killer whales (sometimes called orcas) are the largest members of the dolphin family. Porpoises, which belong to this same order, have many similarities to dolphins and people often confuse them with dolphins. The best way to tell porpoises and dolphins apart is by looking at their heads and snouts. Dolphins have pointed jaws that look something like beaks while porpoises usually have smaller heads and rounded noses. The species of dolphin with which we are most familiar is the bottlenose dolphin, known for its playful behavior and "smiling" face. The natural shape of the dolphin's mouth resembles a smile, which makes it easy to love. These endearing animals are usually the star performers in films, aquariums, zoos, and marine parks. Children may remember the TV star Flipper, who was a bottlenose dolphin.

## Pod Play

Very social animals, dolphins live in pods of from 20 to 100 members. They play, hunt, and live together just like a close family. Teach kids about these fascinating creatures in a slightly different way...through movement. Choose some background instrumental music which provides an aura of the sea (music selections called "sounds of the sea" are often found in nature, greeting card, or novelty stores) and ask students to spread throughout the room pretending to be a pod of dolphins. Talk about how dolphins play, swim, and hunt as a team. Then invite children to "swim" around their "ocean," demonstrating each of the formations and actions as you give directions.

### Formations:

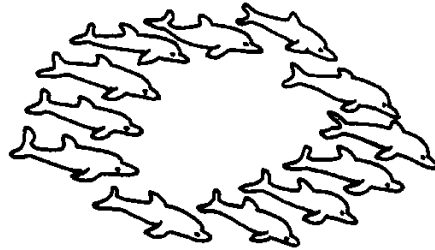
**NAVIGATING**—Dolphins form a V as they swim. Have kids create a V-formation, placing several of the smallest children in the point of the wedge.



**HUNTING**—Dolphins form a circle around a school of fish. Have children move around in a circle and, one by one, dart into the center to feed.



**PARADE**—Dolphins move in an open circle, a square, or single file in a line. Have kids form a circle, a square, or a single line and move in the same direction.



### Actions:

**BREACHING**—Dolphins leap completely out of the water. Have children leap up and dive down again.

**SPY HOPPING**—Dolphins are curious. They peek their heads out of the water to look around. Have children swim and then peek their heads out of the water.

**LOBTAILING**—Dolphins slap their tails on the water. Have children balance on their hands and then slap their feet "tails" on the water.

**SURFING**—Dolphins like to ride and leap the waves made by boats going through the water. Have children pretend to ride the waves as if they're surfing.

**DANCING**—Dolphins balance on their tails as they twist and turn in the air. Have children balance on feet "tails" waving their hand "flippers" while twisting and turning.

**RACING and CHASING**—Dolphins love to play tag and chase other dolphins. Have children swim after each other as though they're playing tag.

## Sea Sounds

Dolphins are real chatterboxes when it comes to making noise...high-pitched squeaks, whistles, clicks, groans, rattles, and whines. Some people believe that dolphins are communicating with each other, but no one knows for sure. They think that dolphins may "talk" with each

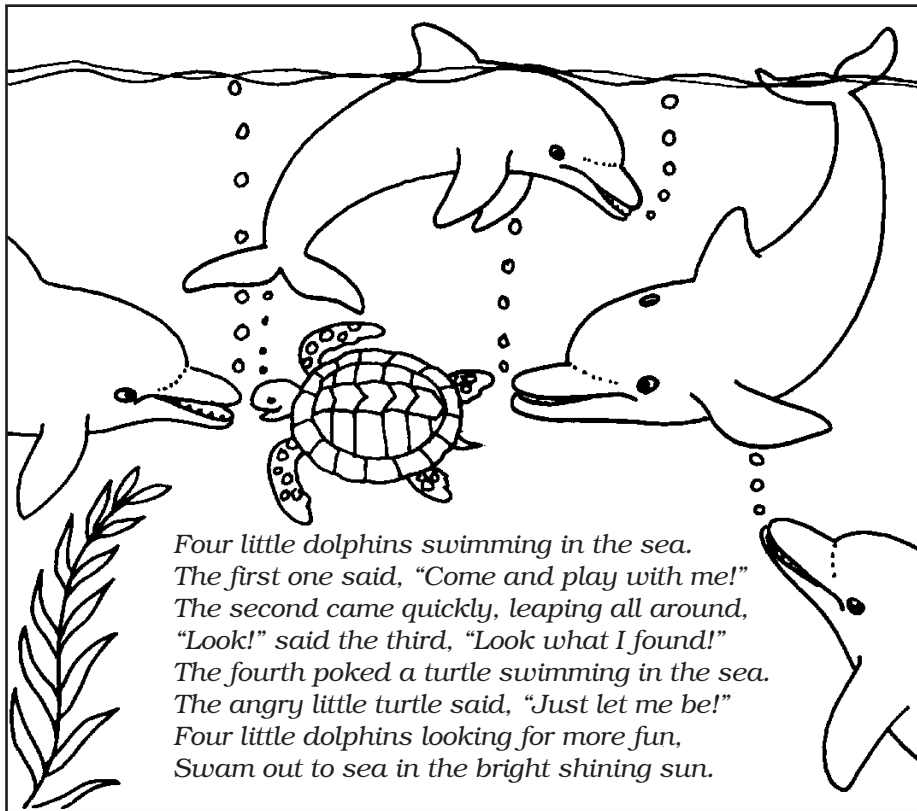
other using a combination of sound, body movements, and postures. Invite a few students to make dolphin sounds and ask other students to respond. To hear real dolphin sounds, visit the Sea World/Busch Gardens Animal Information Database at [www.seaworld.org/](http://www.seaworld.org/). Click on "Animal Info," then "Animal Sounds Library." Next, select "dolphin clicks," "dolphins," and "dolphins underwater." Amazing!

## Sea Echolocation

A dolphin depends on sound waves, or sonar, to find its way underwater or to locate something to eat. This process is called echolocation. Clicking sounds made by the dolphin hit whatever is around it—perhaps a school of fish—and bounce back. In a split second, the dolphin knows the size, shape, speed, and direction of the school of fish and can zero in on its prey. Take the class into an empty gymnasium and experiment with echoes. Invite students to make a sound that bounces off the wall and echoes back to them. And be sure to check out the "Classroom Activities" link found on the Sea World website under "Just for Teachers." There you'll find a teacher's K-3 guide called "Dolphin Documentary."

## Always Playtime

Always looking for fun, dolphins enjoy playing with each other or whatever they find...balls, feathers, pebbles, driftwood, even other animals such as turtles, birds, seals or fish who may not even want to play. They're fun to watch and can be seen frolicking as they leap out of the water, ride the waves, or body surf alongside human surfers. They have been known to make up games, play chase, or even play tug of war with a piece of seaweed. One thing is sure, dolphins love to play! Have fun with this simple poem by asking kids to act out the verses.



Four little dolphins swimming in the sea.  
 The first one said, "Come and play with me!"  
 The second came quickly, leaping all around,  
 "Look!" said the third, "Look what I found!"  
 The fourth poked a turtle swimming in the sea.  
 The angry little turtle said, "Just let me be!"  
 Four little dolphins looking for more fun,  
 Swam out to sea in the bright shining sun.

### Devoted Moms

A dolphin is a loving, protective mother. As soon as her calf is born, tailfirst, the mother gently guides it to the surface for its first breath of air. The calf quickly learns to drink her milk, rich in protein and fat—so rich that the calf doubles its weight within two months. The mother will nurse and protect her calf for the first year and a half of its life. Occasionally, other female dolphins help the mother by acting as baby-sitters or "aunties," protecting the new babies from danger. They may even cooperate by swimming in a circle around the babies in a kind of "playpen" so that the calves can play together safely. Baby dolphins look just like their moms but are only about three feet long. The bond between them is a strong one and before long, their movements become synchronized... when the mom turns, the baby turns; when she dives, the baby dives; when she surfaces to breathe, the calf surfaces, too. Sharks and killer whale attacks are always a worry, and mothers

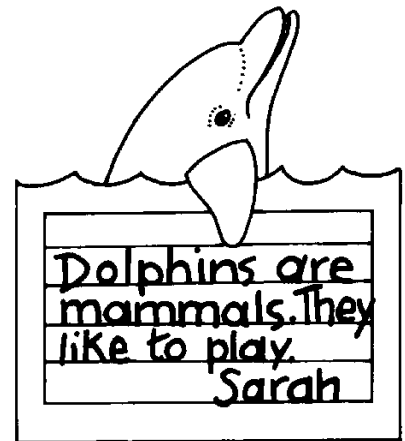
keep their babies close at all times. It seems, though, that dolphin mothers need an endless amount of patience and energy to deal with the rambunctious behavior of the young calves who misbehave by butting heads, poking, chasing, and fooling around!

### Tales of Dolphins

For hundreds of years, people have been fascinated with dolphins. Their friendliness toward humans has inspired tales, legends, and works of art. The ancient Greeks tell a tale of a young poet named Arion who was pirated at sea and thrown overboard. Dolphins rescued the young man and brought him safely home. The ancient city of Delphi, which means "dolphin town," was named after the dolphins. And for centuries, dolphins have helped Australian aborigines catch fish. When a fisherman spotted a school of fish, he slapped the water with his spear. The dolphins soon appeared and chased the fish to shore, where both the dolphins and the fisherman caught their

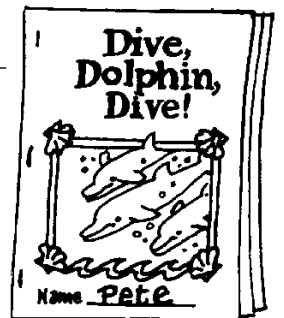
dinner! There are countless stories of dolphins helping people. Share some multicultural stories with your class... **Arion and the Dolphins** by Lonzo Anderson (Scribner), a Greek tale, and **The Rainbow Bridge: Inspired by a Chumash Tale** by Audrey Wood (Harcourt), a Native American tale.

Children may like to write their own dolphin tale. Duplicate the dolphin on page 4 for kids to color and cut out. Show them how to cut a wave pattern along the edge of a sheet of blue construction paper. Glue the dolphin behind the wave and attach the fin on the dotted line. Have kids write a story or dolphin fact on a sheet of lined paper and staple it to the front. Display the stories for all to share.



### I Can Read About Dolphins

Kids will enjoy coloring and reading the take-home booklet "Dive, Dolphin, Dive!" Download the unit and duplicate the pages for each student to color and cut apart. Staple them together in numerical order. Then read about dolphins and help children complete the reading comprehension questions. Encourage them to share the book at home.



### *Dolphin Dangers*

People and pollution are the greatest threats to dolphins. Commercial fishermen, fishing for tuna, use large nets to capture the schools of fish. Since dolphins and tuna often swim together, the dolphins become trapped in the nets and drown. The Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, which made it illegal to hunt or disturb any marine mammals in U.S. waters, has been of some help. And leaders in the tuna industry have developed a special technique for releasing dolphins from the nets. This technique has been successful much of the time. Yet there are no international controls. Chemicals, garbage, and sewage dumped into the ocean pose another problem for dol-

phins. Weakened by pollution, the dolphins become confused, strand themselves on beaches, and die. Mammal stranding centers have been set up along the U.S. coast to help the sick animals. Talk with the children about how we can make a difference in protecting dolphins. We can begin by making sure that we don't pollute. This helps all wildlife. Then, too, we can purchase only dolphin-safe tuna from processing plants which use safeguards for protecting dolphins. Help children locate the "Dolphin-Safe" symbol on tuna labels so they will look for it when grocery shopping.

### *Dolphin Resources*

Let your fingers do the walking to the Internet and find some

interesting facts about dolphins. There's a wealth of information about dolphins, killer whales, and other ocean life on the Sea World/Busch Gardens web site at [www.seaworld.org/](http://www.seaworld.org/). Within the animal information database, educational resources, and classroom activities, you'll find extensive factual information and practical ideas for classroom activities. Encourage kids to compare the sounds of dolphins with the many other sea animal sounds that can be found in the Animal Sounds Library. Check your local film library for the video "Dolphins and Orcas" by wildlife photographer Bob Talbot, creator of the film "Free Willy." You may also find the DVD available for purchase at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

