

Whales and Dolphins

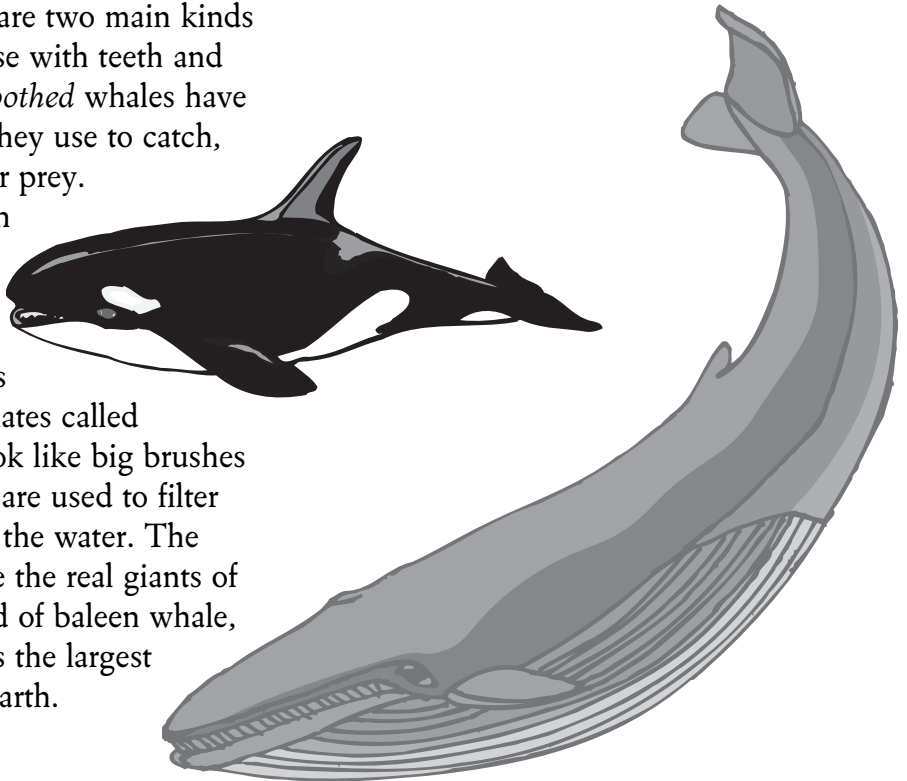
There are about 76 different kinds of whales and dolphins around the world. Even though they live in water, whales and dolphins are not fish. They are warm-blooded mammals, like cats, dogs, and humans. Like other mammals, their babies are born alive and feed on mother's milk. Mammals breathe air and cannot breathe underwater as fish do. Most whales and dolphins must come up for air after several minutes, or they would drown. A few, though, can stay under for an hour or more.

All whales and dolphins belong to the group of mammals called *cetaceans*. There are two main kinds of cetaceans: those with teeth and those without. *Toothed* whales have sharp teeth that they use to catch, bite, and kill their prey.

Baleen whales, on the other hand, do not have teeth. Instead, they have mouths full of hanging plates called baleen, which look like big brushes or combs. These are used to filter bits of food from the water. The baleen whales are the real giants of the sea. One kind of baleen whale, the blue whale, is the largest living thing on Earth.

All dolphins are whales, and they have teeth. Names can be confusing, though, especially when some dolphins are called *dolphins* and some others are called *whales*. Killer whales, for example, are really dolphins.

The killer whale is one of the most handsome beasts in the sea. It doesn't look much like other dolphins, which are a dull gray or all black. The killer whale is marked with a clear pattern of black and white, and it is the largest of the dolphins. But it is still much smaller than the baleen whales.



Bottlenose dolphins are probably the best known dolphins. They are the ones most often seen on TV and in marine parks. They can be trained to perform jumps, flips, and other exciting moves. Killer whales, too, can be trained to perform jumps and flips. Sea World's Shamu[®] is one example. During their training and while they are performing, the dolphins are rewarded often, usually with a fish, for carrying out certain behaviors. However, since these are all natural behaviors to begin with, the question is, who's training whom? Dolphins and whales are very intelligent creatures.