

ABC Phonics: Sign, Sign and Read! Building Voracious Vocabulary

What do we know about alligators?

- An alligator is a **reptile** which means it has a **backbone**, it needs warmth from the sun, and it has dry, **scaly** skin.
- They are **carnivores**, and "they might eat you!"
- They can swim in the water and travel on land.
- Alligators live in the **coastal** waters of southeast states: Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Texas.
- They like a warm, wet **habitat** and live on every continent except **Europe** and **Antarctica**.
- Alligators are **oviparous** animals: The young are hatched from eggs and look like their parents.

What do we wonder about bears?

- A bear is a **mammal** which means it is warm-blooded, it has a backbone, it has fur, and it has lungs for breathing.
- Bears are **omnivores** - they eat meat and plants.
- Their heavy fur can be brown, black, or white.
- They eat to get fat in the fall, and **hibernate** in the winter.
- Bears can run faster than a human being can.
- They are **myopic** (near-sighted) but their sense of smell is very **keen**.

What have we learned about cats?

- Cats are mammals.
- They are the only **domestic** part of the **feline** family.
- Felines also include wild cats like tigers, lions, and **pumas (cougars)**.
- They are **predators**—they like to try to catch mice and birds.
- When a cat rubs his head against you, he is saying, "You are my human."

Let's learn about dogs:

- A dog is a domestic part of the **canine** family
- Dogs are good pets because they are **loyal** friends.
- All canines, including wolves, coyotes, and **hyenas**, are **pack animals**.
- Some work and some are family dogs but they all love to play.

What do we know about elephants?

- Elephants are mammals. Did you know they have hair? It is very **sparse** across their bodies.
- Their trunks are very **dexterous**. They use them for picking up food and water, for keeping their young close by, for washing themselves, and to **defend** themselves.
- They live to be 60 or 70 years old.
- They stay together in **herds** and live like a big family.
- They **wallow** in the mud to stay cool.

What do we wonder about foxes?

- Foxes are **omnivores**.
- Their favorite foods are **rodents** and eggs but they will also eat insects, berries, and grass.
- Their fur might be red, silver, or white.
- The mother fox, called a **vixen** and father fox, called a **reynard**, have a **litter** of 5-10 pups.
- The fox family is **capricious** (playful) and love to chase and **pounce** on each other.

Let's learn about goats:

- Goats are **herbivores** - they eat only plants.
- They chew their **cud** to digest their food.
- They are friendly, **boisterous** animals and often will play with each other by **butting** heads.
- The babies, or **kids**, drink milk from their mothers.
- In some parts of the world, people drink goat milk instead of cow milk.

How many kinds of hats can you name?

- A **haberdashery** is where hats are made.
- We know that a cowboy hat and a baseball cap can keep the sun out of your eyes. So does a **bonnet** and a **sombrero**.
- A motorcycle rider, a fireman, and a football player all wear **helmets** to **protect** their heads.
- Hats can show a person's **occupation**. A king wears a crown and a soldier wears a **beret**.

What do we wonder about insects?

- All insects have six legs and three body parts: a head, a **thorax**, and an **abdomen**.
- There are many, many more insects than people on the earth.
- Their **antennae** are used for feeling and for **navigation**.
- A ladybug, dragonfly, **katydid**, **wasp**, **moth**, and **boll weevil** are all insects.
- Some insects, like the housefly, live only for one day while the **locust** lives as a **pupa** for 17 years before hatching from an egg.

What other words are there for jump?

- We can also leap, **bound**, hop, **hurdle**, and leapfrog.
- People and animals use their biggest **muscles** for jumping.
- A flea can jump 30 times its own **height**.
- In sports, people have contests to see who can jump the highest or the farthest.
- Jumping rope is good **exercise**.
- The sign for jump is **symbolic**

What can we learn about a kangaroo?

- Kangaroos are **indigenous** to the **continent** of **Australia**.
- A kangaroo is a **marsupial** which means a baby kangaroo, or **joey**, lives in its mother's pouch.
- Kangaroos protect themselves from **enemies** by kicking with their powerful **hind legs**.
- The males can grow over six feet tall!

What do we know about lions?

- A lion lives in dry grassy area of Africa called a **savannah**.
- A family of lions is called a **pride**.
- Only the adult **male** lion has a **mane**.
- Often the **female**, or **lioness**, **stalks prey** for the family to eat.
- Three to four lion cubs are born each year.
- A male lion roars to frighten **intruders** away.

What do we wonder about monkeys?

- A monkey is in the **primate** family, as well as gorillas, orangutans, and chimpanzees.
- A monkey does not make a good pet. It is **mischievous** and **destructive**.
- Monkeys are very smart and learn to **manipulate** things with their hands.
- They are not **native** to North America.
- Monkeys never live alone but in groups called "**troops**."

What do we know about nests?

- Nests are **dwelling**s often made from grasses, sticks, and string.
- Did you know that a squirrel, an ant, and a lizard also live in nests?
- A bird's nest is used only to raise its young.
- A hummingbird's nest is only 2 inches wide.
- An eagle's nest five feet wide and three feet deep!

What have we learned about an octopus?

- An octopus is not a mammal, nor an **amphibian**, nor a fish. It is a **cephalopod** which means it has a large head and many legs with **tentacles**.
- The **tentacles**, or suction cups, on its eight legs help it crawl into tight spaces.
- If **provoked**, an octopus will hide, **flee**, or change colors to **camouflage** itself.
- They can climb out of their tanks, crawl to another tank to find food, and crawl back.
- Octopuses like to eat crabs, fish, and clams.

What can we learn about pianos?

- Pianos were **invented** over 300 years ago.
- It has strings like a violin; it also is like a **percussion** instrument because you strike the keys to play it.
- Children learn to play songs like "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" on a piano.
- What has 88 keys but no door? A piano!

What have we learned about a queen?

- A queen is part of an **imperial** family.
- For special occasions, a queen will wear a crown with jewels called a **tiara**.
- A good queen loves the **citizens** of her country and they respect her.
- A queen learns how to have perfect manners when she is a young princess.
- If you ever meet a queen, you will bow or **curtsey** before speaking to her.

What do we wonder about rainbows?

- You see the colors of a rainbow when the sun **reflects** and **refracts** the light in raindrops.
- A transparent glass with three sides called a **prism** can be used to create the colors of the rainbow.
- Can you name the seven colors in a rainbow?
- If you remember the funny-sounding name of **Roy G. Biv**, you can name the colors in a rainbow, a color for each letter.
- Here is a color song to the melody to Arthur Hamilton's *I Can Sing a Rainbow*.
Red and orange, yellow and green.
Blue, indigo, violet too.
I can sing a rainbow,
Sign a rainbow,
Sing a rainbow too.

What can we learn about sunshine?

- Sunshine makes plants turn green through a process called **photosynthesis**.
- It takes over eight minutes for sunshine to travel from the Sun to the Earth.
- Did you know sunshine comes from a star in our **Solar System**? Yes, the Sun is a star!

What do we know about turtles?

- Most turtles are **terrestrial** reptiles.
- Turtles don't have **outer ears** but they can feel **vibrations**.
- Turtles that live in cold **climates** will hibernate in mud in the winter.
- Sometimes a turtle is called a **terrapin** or a **tortoise**.
- They eat bugs, worms, and vegetables.
- Some big tortoises live to be 100 years old!

What can we learn about umbrellas?

- An umbrella protects you from rain and sunshine, and some provide **privacy**.
- In some countries, they are made from large leaves, feathers, or corn husks.
- Umbrellas were **invented** over 2000 years ago.
- What is also known as a **parasol** or **bumbershoot**?

What can we learn about volcanoes?

- A volcano is a mountain that sits above a **molten** lake of rocks called **magma**.
- The **pressure** from below needs to escape, so it **erupts** through the top or through **fissures** on the sides.
- The **lava** that flows down is 10 times as hot as boiling water!
- Most **active** volcanoes in the USA are on the west coast or in Alaska.

What do we wonder about the world?

- The world we live in is on the **planet** Earth.
- It takes one day for our world to **rotate** once.
- It takes one year for our world to **orbit** the sun.
- We can also talk about the world of music, the world of sports, and a child's world.

What do we know about an x-ray?

- An x-ray is a **radiograph** of the inside of a body.
- Your body has soft **tissue**, like your skin and lungs, and **dense** tissue like your bones and teeth.
- The densest tissue shows up white on an x-ray.
- Dentists can **diagnose** how healthy your teeth are by **examining** an x-ray.

What can we learn about a yo-yo?

- A yo-yo is made up of string on an **axle** between two **wheels**.
- A yo-yo falls from your hand because of **gravity** and rewinds because of **centrifugal force**.
- One yo-yo trick is called "**walk the dog**."
- Does it take practice to make a yo-yo **descend** and **ascend**?

What do we wonder about a zebra?

- A zebra is part of the **equine** family.
- Zebra herds live only in *Africa*.
- Some **dwell** on the plains and some dwell in the mountains.
- Lions prey on old or weak zebras.
- Is a zebra white with black stripes or white with black stripes?