

# DOLPHINS

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# Teacher's Book



## Dolphin facts

The bottlenose dolphin is one of the most famous and popular animals, as it is found in every ocean on the planet and is the most common in dolphinariums around the world. Although its size may vary depending on its habitat, its most common colouration is quite homogeneous: dull grey (with variations in darker tones), and white and pink belly.

The most stable structure is females with adolescents. Adult males move from one group to another, to ensure genetic diversity.

There are 9 dolphins living at Loro Parque:

- 4 males, which are: Aquiles, Ulises, Paco and César
- 5 females, which are: Pachina, Ilse, Ruffles and Clara.

They inhabit temperate, subtropical, or tropical waters. Like orcas, there are two types of dolphins: coastal dolphins and oceanic dolphins. Coastal dolphins are those that live close to the coast, at a depth of between 100 and 200 metres, and oceanic dolphins are those that live in open sea and migrate.

Like other cetaceans, dolphins live in groups of up to hundreds of individuals, although they usually live in groups of between 15 and 25 individuals, communicating with each other by whistling and clicking. They are by nature very playful: they perform pirouettes, jump and ride waves, and the whole group gets organised to perform different activities: hunting, playing, etc.





## Captive Breeding

Breeding dolphins under human care is not difficult, as long as they feel well and comfortable. Loro Parque's dolphins live in one of the most modern facilities in the world today, with more than 7 million litres of water brought directly from the ocean and filtered throughout the day. The enclosure has five swimming pools where they play every day in the best conditions.

For years, Loro Parque has been involved in a very successful dolphin breeding programme. For example, Ilse, the youngest of the group, is one such dolphin. The programme allows us to study these animals, which would not be possible without the collaboration of scientists, biologists, veterinarians, and the trainers who are so close to the dolphins and know them so well. They are all specialists, so the dolphins' welfare is guaranteed, and their collaboration allows the evolution and discovery of new techniques to preserve this species.

Thanks to the keepers' medical training, in addition to being able to know exactly how the dolphins feel at any given moment, they can look after them when they are unwell without stressing them.

### How to save dolphins?

Although dolphins are not a protected species, there are numerous factors arising from human activities that are affecting them, just like all other cetaceans around the world. Some of these activities are overfishing (which has resulted in less food), pollution, global warming, entanglement in nets, etc. How can we help them? Through responsible fish consumption, reducing the use of plastics and/or pollutants, and funding studies and projects such as those carried out by Loro Parque Fundación.

## Interesting facts

Groups of bottlenose dolphins are often seen in the company of other cetaceans, such as pilot whales or whales; and, in fact, there are hybrids with other cetacean species, both in captivity and in the wild.

A dolphin eats an average of 6 kg of fish per day, but a lactating female may double or triple this amount to produce rich milk to feed her baby.

They hold their breath for up to 10 minutes underwater, and dive to depths of 7-13 metres (although a trained one once went as deep as 547 metres).

Their skin is very soft, with a layer of fat that can be easily damaged but also heals very quickly. One of its most important functions is to help them swim more efficiently, as it works as a turbulence pressure sensor: at one point on the surface of the body, excess pressure is produced, and it deforms so that the body slides better in the water.

They use a technique called echolocation to detect fish and to recognise their environment. This technique consists of emitting waves that, when they bounce off objects in their path, reach their jaw and generate an image in their brain of the object they bounced off.



## Animal factsheet

### Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)

Kingdom: *Animalia*

Phylum: *Chordata*

Class: *Mammalia*

Order: Cetacea

Family: *Delphinidae*

Genus: *Tursiops*

Species: *Tursiops truncatus*

Size: adults between 2.5-4 metres

Weight: adults up to 650 kg

Gestation: 11 to 12 months

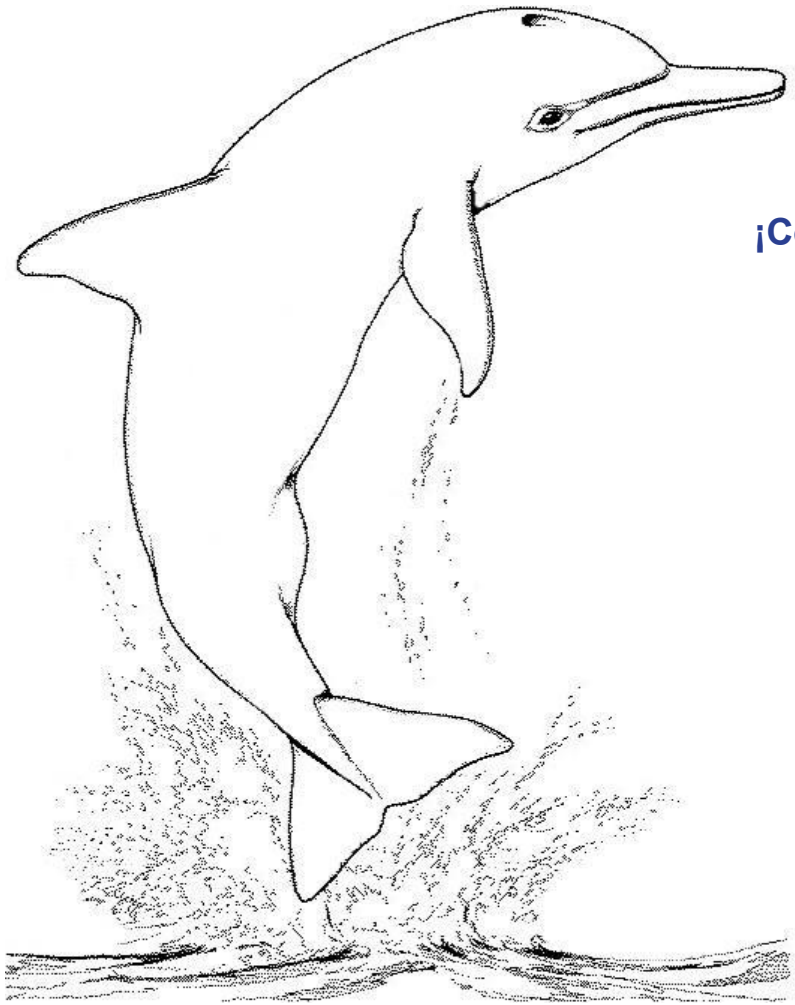
Maximum age: 40-50 years

Distribution: all oceans of the world



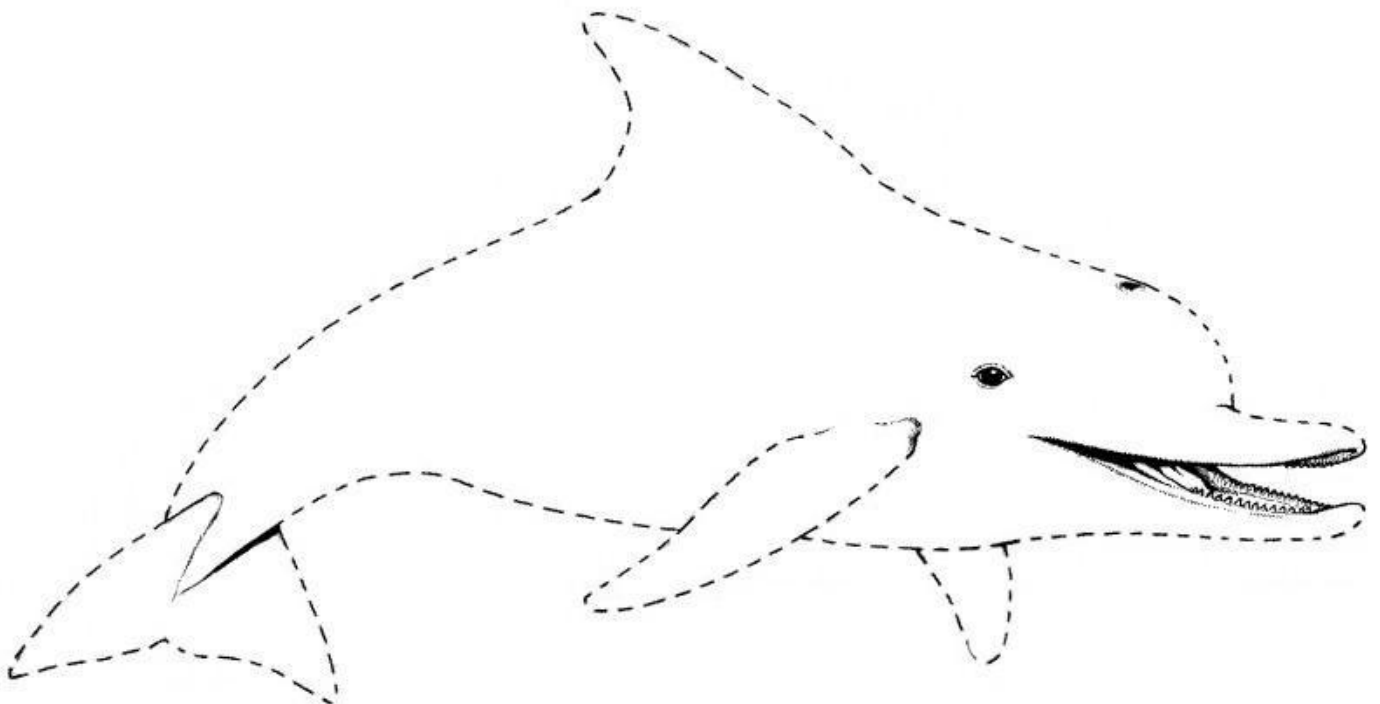
Hi guys!  
I'm one of the keepers at Loro Parque, and I'm going to talk to you about my daily work with the dolphins. There are 9 dolphins living here: 4 males (Aguiles, Ulises, César and Paco) and 5 females (Pachina, Luna, Ilse, Ruffles and Clara). All of them are super playful and especially with their trainers, with whom they have a close relationship. We, the trainers, spend many hours a day playing with them, reinforcing their behaviour, and never punishing them. As they are very intelligent and active, we have to train and do many activities with them, although they also have free time in which we bring out their toys and things they like. Our dolphins are weighed weekly and we do monthly blood tests to prevent any illnesses, because in dolphins, illnesses are not noticeable until they are well advanced. If they stopped eating, they would already be very sick, and that is why we are committed to prevention and we do not allow such things to happen here. Each dolphin eats about 10 kilos of fish a day (sardines, herring, squid...) and we also give them vitamin supplements under our veterinarians' strict control. Dolphins take water from their food, they don't drink it, so we are very careful to provide them with water so that they don't dehydrate, which is very important for their health. In addition to this, our pools are continuously filtered and cleaned every morning by us, in order to keep them healthy. Also, our pools are constantly filtered and we clean them every morning to avoid infections or algae accumulation.

PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES



¡Colour in Cesar!

Follow the dots to discover Ilse, then you can colour her in!



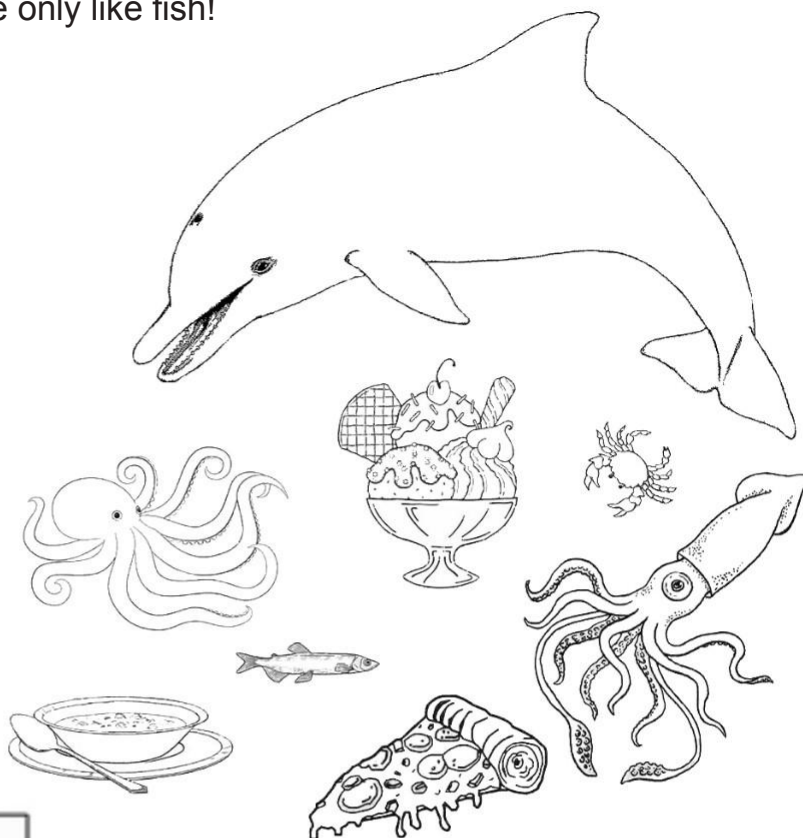
# PRIMARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Hello! We are Loro Parque's 9 dolphins: Paco, César, Aquiles, Ulises, Pachina, Luna, Ilse, Clara, and Ruffes.

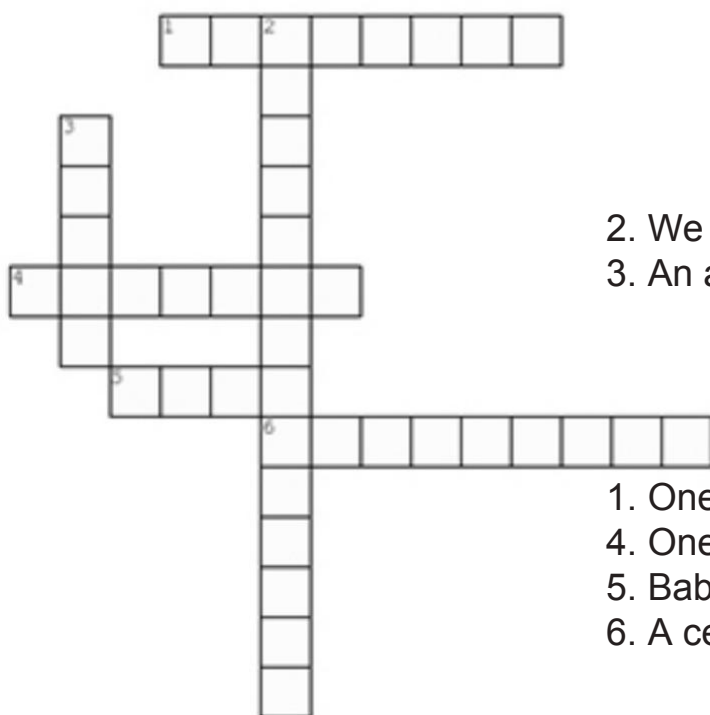
We love to play with the keepers because they are very kind to us, and they give us food all day long (even during the presentations).

Adult dolphins usually eat up to 10 kilos of food a day, and calves eat less (in fact, each of us is given a personalised diet). We love to eat mackerel, capelin, and cephalopods (such as octopus and squid), i.e., we only like fish!

**What do dolphins like to eat most? Colour it in!**



**Using words from the text, solve the following crossword puzzle**



**Vertical**

- 2. We also eat during this activity
- 3. An activity we love

**Horizontal**

- 1. One of the fish we love
- 4. One of Loro Parque's female dolphins
- 5. Baby dolphin
- 6. A cephalopod that we love to eat



# PRIMARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Did you know that dolphins' dorsal fins are like a fingerprint? Each dolphin has a different one! See what they look like and analyse their differences.



**Aquiles:**

**Ulises:**

**Clara:**

**Paco:**

**Ruffles:**

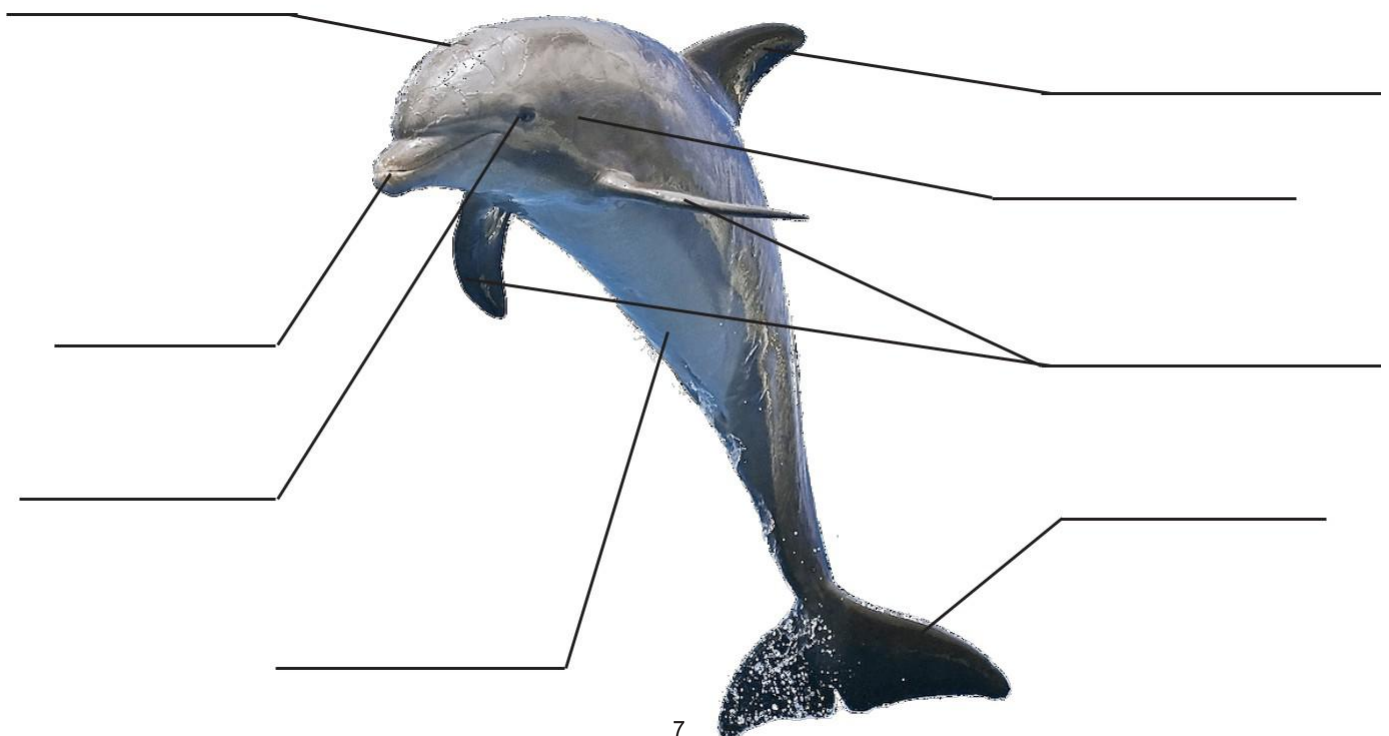
**Luna:**

**Pachina:**

**César:**

**Ilse:**

Do you think you know a dolphin's body? Write the following words on the corresponding body part: DORSAL FIN, PECTORAL FLIPPERS, CAUDAL FIN, SPIRACLE, MOUTH, EYE, BELLY, EAR.





# PRIMARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Match the following concepts to find out what we can do to save the dolphins.



Dolphins playing

A



Stop littering the sea



Entanglements

B



Responsible consumption



They can't find food

C



Responsible sightings



Fish with plastic

D



Stop using plastic bags

## SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

### Text and questions to work with students.

*Dolphins have very few predators: some shark species, killer whales, and humans. They are not an endangered species but are indirectly vulnerable to several threats. The main one is that they migrate depending on the food available, and given that overfishing is increasingly common, they must travel farther and farther to eat. In addition, fishermen often regard them as competitors and kill them to prevent them from taking their fish.*

1. *Do you think overfishing is a serious threat to dolphins?*
2. *How do you think we can help?*
3. *Do you know of any other threats dolphins face? Which one(s)?*



### Research work

Do you know what echolocation is and how dolphins use it? Do you think they are affected by marine radars? Research this topic and discuss with your classmates whether this activity can harm them and why.

