

## What to do today

*IMPORTANT Parent or Carer – Read this page with your child and check that you are happy with what they have to do and any weblinks or use of internet.*

### 1. Take notes from a video

- Watch the Steve Backshall video clip about Grey Wolves:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pi3KPf1LuLM>
- When you have finished, make some notes about 3-5 things that you remember from the video.
- Now watch again. Spot answers to the questions on *Video watching*:

### 2. Answer questions from a report

- Read *Wolf Report 1*.
- Now either answer *Wolf Report 1 Questions* or, if you would like more of a challenge, read *Wolf Report 2* and answer the questions about it instead.

*When you have finished, talk to a grown-up about your answers. Show them where you found the answers in the text.*

### 3. Add captions to a picture

- Add some of the facts that you have learnt to the *Wolf Picture*. Write in your own words and choose where you will write each fact.

### Try the Fun-Time Extra

- Read the poem, 'A wolf in the park'. Can you learn some or all of it by heart? Can you write another verse? Can you make some illustrations that would fit the different verses?

## Video Watching

As you watch, look for answers to these questions:

- How much more powerful is a wolf bite than a German Shepherd police-dog?
- How much more powerful is a wolf's sense of smell than ours?
- How far way can wolves hear another's howl?



# Wolf Report 1

## **Appearance**

Adult wolves are usually 1.4 to 1.8 metres in length from nose to tail. Wolves living in the far north tend to be larger than those living further south. As adults they may weigh typically between 23 to 50 kilograms. The heaviest wolf recorded weighed 86 kilograms.

Wolves usually measure 65–97 centimetres at the shoulder. Wolves have fur made up of two layers. The top layer is resistant to dirt, and the under layer is water resistant. The colour of their fur can be any combination of grey, white, red, brown, and black.



## **Diet**

Wolves are carnivores and eat mostly medium to large size hoofed animals, but they will also eat smaller animals. Some wolves have been seen eating salmon, seals, beached whales, lizards, snakes and birds. Wolves usually stalk old or sick animals, but they do not always catch what they stalk. They may go days without food. Sometimes only one out of twelve hunts are successful. But the way they eat stays the same. The alpha male and female feed first. Then the other members feed. Sometimes (especially if the prey they have killed is large) wolves may store food and come back that day to feed on it. Wolves have very sharp teeth which helps them tear large chunks of meat from a dead animal. Wolves will also swallow food and then bring it back up for pups to eat.

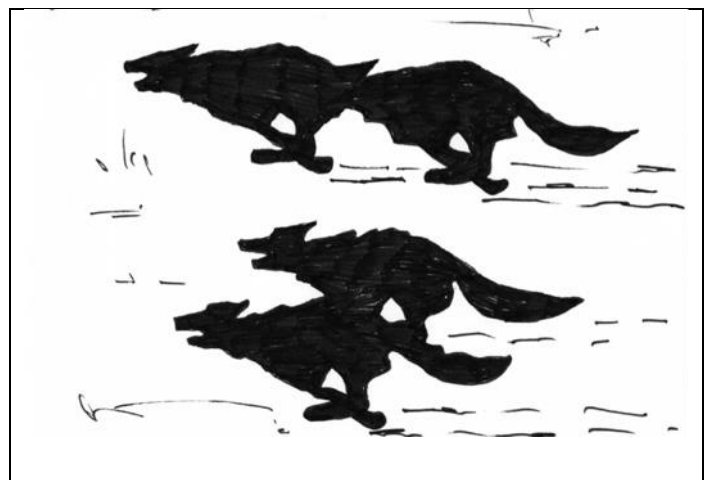
## Life

Wolves live in groups called "packs". They hunt in packs. The members of the pack are usually family members, often just the parents and offspring. Wolves that are not family may join if they do not have a pack of their own. Packs are usually up to twelve wolves, but they can be as small as two or as large as twenty-five. The leaders are called the parent male and the parent female. Their territory is marked by scent and howling; they will fight any intruders. Young wolves are called 'pups' or 'whelps'. Adult females usually give birth to five or six pups in a litter.

Wolves make a noise called a howl. They howl to communicate with each other from long distances and to mark the edges of their territory. Wolves have a complicated body language.

Wolves can run very fast and far. A wolf can run 20–30 miles in a day.

Grey wolves can live six to eight years. They can live in captivity for up to 17 years.

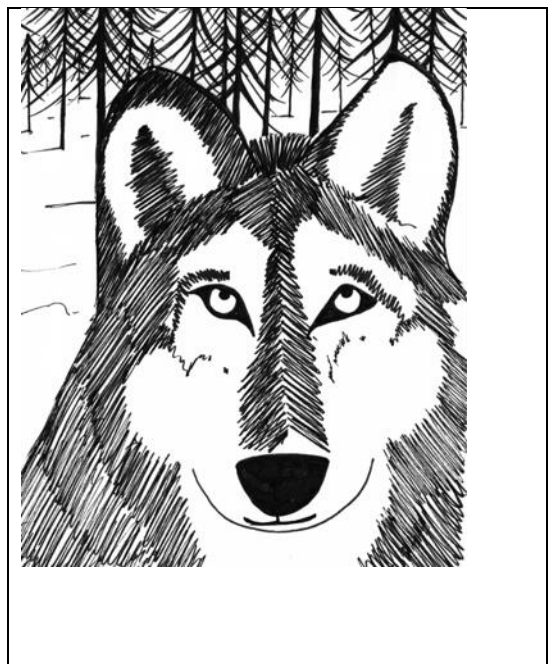


## Wolf Report 2

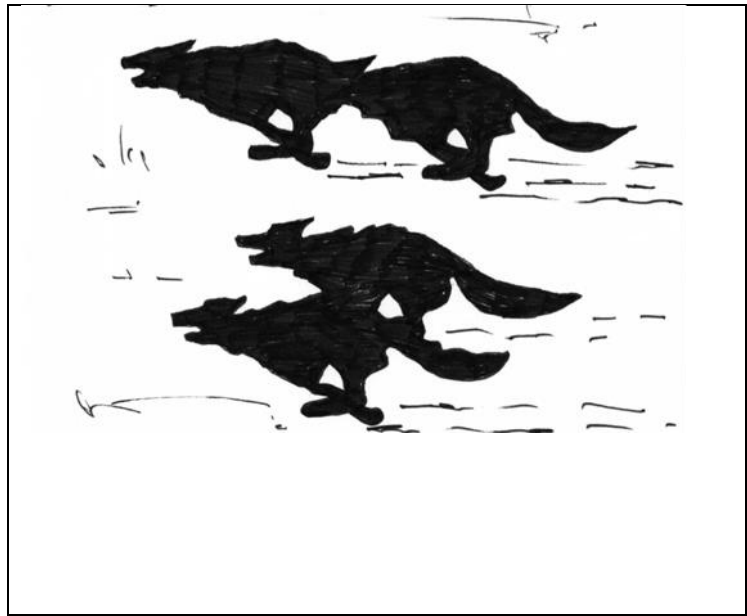
The grey wolf is the largest existing member of the Canidae family, apart from some large breeds of domestic dog. Grey wolf weight and size can vary greatly worldwide, with the large wolves of Alaska and Canada sometimes weighing 3–6 times more than their Middle Eastern and South Asian cousins. On average, adult wolves measure 105–160 cm in length and 80–85 cm in shoulder height. The tail measures 29–50 cm in length. The ears are 90–110 mm in height, and the hind feet are 220–250 mm. The mean body mass of the extant grey wolf is 40 kg with the smallest specimen recorded at 12 kg and the largest at 79.4 kg.

Compared to its closest wild cousins (the coyote and golden jackal), the grey wolf is larger and heavier, with a broader snout, shorter ears, a shorter torso and longer tail. It is a slender, powerfully built animal with a large, deeply descending ribcage, a sloping back and a heavily muscled neck. The wolf's legs are moderately longer than those of other canids, which enables the animal to move swiftly, and allows it to overcome the deep snow that covers most of its geographical range.

The ears are relatively small and triangular. Females tend to have narrower muzzles and foreheads, thinner necks, slightly shorter legs and less massive shoulders than males. The grey wolf usually carries its head at the same level as the back, raising it only when alert. It usually travels at a loping pace, placing its paws one directly in front of the other.



This gait allows the wolf to cover great distances. The grey wolf has a running gait of km/h 34–43 mph, can leap 5 m horizontally in a single bound, and can maintain rapid pursuit for at least 20 minutes.



The grey wolf's head is large and heavy, with a wide forehead, strong jaws and a long, blunt muzzle. The skull averages 230–280 mm in length, and 130–150 mm wide. The teeth are heavy and large, being better suited to crushing bone than those of other extant canids, though not as specialised as those found in hyenas. Its molars have a flat chewing surface. The grey wolf's jaws can exert a crushing pressure of perhaps 10,340 kPa (1,500 psi) compared to 5,200 kPa for a German shepherd. This force is sufficient to break open most bones.

The grey wolf has very dense and fluffy winter fur, with short underfur and long, coarse guard hairs. Most of the underfur and some of the guard hairs are shed in the spring and grow back in the autumn period. The longest hairs occur on the back, particularly on the front quarters and neck. Especially long hairs are on the shoulders, and almost form a crest on the upper part of the neck. The hairs on the cheeks are elongated and form tufts. The ears are covered in short hairs, which strongly project from the fur.

The winter fur is highly resistant to cold; wolves in northern climates can rest comfortably in open areas at  $-40^{\circ}$  by placing their muzzles between the rear legs and covering their faces with their tail.

Wolf fur provides better insulation than dog fur and does not collect ice when warm breath is condensed against it. In warm climates, the fur is coarser and scarcer than in northern wolves. Female wolves tend to have smoother furred limbs than males, and generally develop the smoothest overall coats as they age. Older wolves generally have more white hairs in the tip of the tail, along the nose and on the forehead.



Coat colour ranges from almost pure white through various shades of blond, cream, and ochre to greys, browns, and blacks. Black specimens are more common in North America than in Eurasia, with about half the wolves in Yellowstone National Park being black.

## Wolf Report 1 Questions

*These questions are about Wolves Appearance*

How long are adult wolves?

What are they measured to and from?

What was the weight of the heaviest wolf recorded?

What colours can wolf fur be?

*These questions are about Wolves Life*

What is the name for a group of wolves?

What is the largest size of a pack of wolves?

What are two names for young wolves?

How far can a wolf run in a day?

*These questions are about Wolves Diet*

What do wolves mainly eat?

What type of animals do wolves stalk?

Which wolves feed first?

What do their sharp teeth help wolves to do?



## Wolf Report 2 Questions

What makes wolves a distinctive member of their family?

How could someone distinguish between a grey wolf and a golden jackal?

Would you describe a wolf as slender? Why/why not?

What could you tell about a wolf if you saw its head raised?

How is a wolf's gait suited to its behaviour?

How is a wolf's jaw suited to its diet?

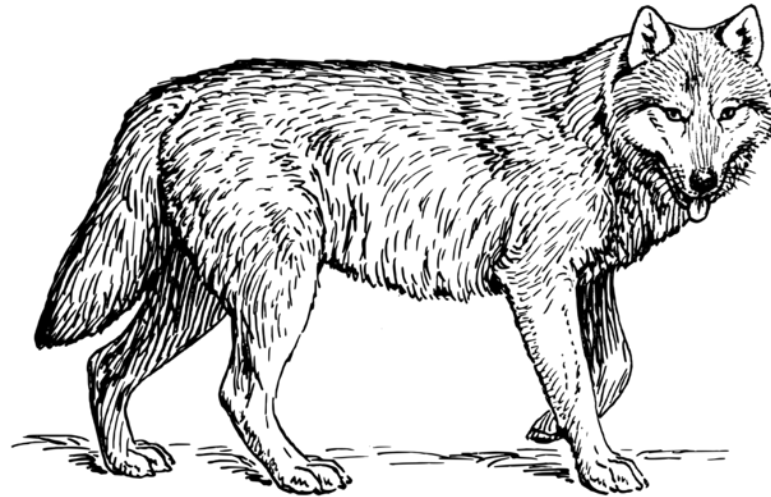
Why do you think that a wolf's underfur is shed?

What does it mean to describe the hairs on a wolf's cheeks as elongated?

How might someone spot an older wolf in a pack? How might they identify a female?

Where might you be most likely to see a black coloured wolf?

Wolf Picture



## **A wolf in the park**

Is there a wolf,  
A wolf in the park,  
A wolf who wakes when the night gets dark?  
Is there a wolf in the park?

Is there a wolf,  
A wolf who creeps  
From his hidden den while the city sleeps?  
Is there a wolf in the park?

Is there a wolf,  
Whose nightly track  
Circles the park fence, zigzags back?  
Is there a wolf in the park?

Is there a wolf,  
Who pads his way  
Between the tables of the closed café,  
Is there a wolf in the park?

Is there a wolf,  
A wolf whose bite  
Left those feathers by the pond last night,  
Is there a wolf in the park?

Is there a wolf?  
No one knows,  
But I've heard a howl when the full moon glows . . .  
Is there a wolf in the park?

by Richard Edwards