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The Dolphin Fin Question

Why do dolphins have a fin on their back?

In this episode we discover that dolphins are mammals, which means their mums make milk for their babies. They have a backbone and they breathe air. Dolphins have long rounded bodies, a tail and two fins on their sides. These help them steer and stay balanced while they swim. Most dolphins also have a fin on their backs. So do other animals like sharks. It's called a dorsal fin. The dorsal fin helps stop dolphins from tipping over while they swim. It's part of what makes them such amazing swimmers. And that's why dolphins have a fin on their back.

Wonder some more ...

1. How many fins do dolphins have?
2. What other marine animals have a dorsal fin?
3. Is a dolphin's skin smooth or rough?
4. Can dolphins live in fresh and salt water?
5. Are all dolphins the same colour?
6. Why does a dolphin need a tail (fluke)?



Time to explore...

- **EXPERIMENT WITH DIY DOLPHINS:**

Conduct a science experiment to explore how a dorsal fin helps keep dolphins balanced in the water. Build 'dolphin' models using masking tape, a small plastic juice bottle filled with water for the body and foam (or plastic) triangular shapes for the dorsal fin. Test how the 'dolphins' float and investigate if they have better stability with or without a dorsal fin.

- **MAKE A JUMPING DOLPHIN PAPER PLATE THEATRE:** Create a storytelling prop using a paper plate painted ocean blue shades as the base, together with a glued drawing (or photo) of a dolphin. Using a split pin, secure another ½ paper plate (cut in a wave shape) on top. Encourage children to make up and tell stories as they spin their plate and watch the dolphin jump in and out of the waves!



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Read and wonder...

- *Dolphins* (2018) by Mari C Schuh
- *Dolphins and Porpoises* (2020) by Marie Pearson
- *Nelson's Dangerous Dive* (2018) by Ellie Jackson & Laura Callwood

Link to EYLF Learning Outcomes including 4.2, 4.4, 5.1 and 5.3.



Early Education