




Can YOU speak DOLPHIN?

Discover the secret life of the world's underwater acrobats...

DID YOU KNOW...?

There are more than 30 species of dolphin in the world, including six that live in rivers! Sadly, many of these species are under threat.

 Frolicking in the waters of Cardigan Bay in Wales, a bottlenose dolphin playfully twists and turns before leaping out of the ocean. The sleek swimmer splashes back down into the sea, its curved mouth making it look like it's smiling — it seems to squeal with delight as it darts around in the water. So is it possible to work out what this beautiful creature is 'saying'?

Whistling wonders

Dolphins are mammals, like you, swimming to the surface two or three times every minute to breathe air. And just as you have fun with your mates, or you work together with friends or family members, dolphins team up in groups (called pods) to get things done, too.

The super swimmers 'talk' to each other by whistling, squawking, clicking, chirping and even squeaking from the moment they're born. "Sometimes, when members of a pod vocalise at the same time, it can be a bit like a lot of people chattering at a party," explains bottlenose dolphin expert, Sara Waller. "At other times one dolphin will appear to vocalise and another will seem to answer!"

Scientists have been studying dolphin communication for many years, and they've discovered that the mammals identify themselves with 'signature whistles', a bit like you have a name. Each signature whistle is so distinct that experts can identify individual dolphins by recording their whistles and viewing the patterns these sounds produce on special machines called sonograms.

Actions speak louder

Just as you will pull faces and make hand gestures while you speak, dolphins communicate through movement, too. They'll

blow bubbles, clap their jaws, give each other fin 'hugs' and express themselves through their body posture. It's thought that these smart marine mammals talk about everything — from their age and their feelings to warning each other about nearby predators.

"I believe that bottlenose dolphins say things like 'There are some great fish over there!' or 'Watch out for that shark!'" explains Denise Herzing, from the Wild Dolphin Project. She says she's even seen dolphins sticking up for each other when they've been bullied!

DOLPHIN LANGUAGE DECODED...

BEHAVIOUR	Rubbing fins after being apart.	S-shaped body posture.	Approaching from behind.	Tail-slapping.	Touching fin to side of another dolphin.
WHAT THE DOLPHIN IS SAYING	Hello, I missed you!	Watch out!	Let's play!	Back off!	Hey, give me a hand!
SIMILAR BEHAVIOUR IN HUMANS	Shaking hands.	Waving clenched fist in the air.	Starting a game of tag.	Hand up, signalling "stop, keep away."	Tapping someone on the shoulder.