

# Tiger

They can move silently through the forest. They can kill a huge wild boar with a single bite. Their roar sends shivers down your spine. They are perhaps the perfect killing machines. They are tigers.

## TIGERS ARE HUGE CATS

Tigers are members of the cat family. Lions, leopards, cheetahs, and house cats are also members of the cat family. Tigers are the largest cats, and the only cats with stripes. They live in large forests in southern and southeastern Asia.

A tiger's short fur is usually colored dark orange with black stripes. Each tiger has different stripes, and you can use them to tell tigers apart. The stripes make a tiger stand out if you see them in the open. In the forests where tigers live, however, the stripes make them almost invisible.

Like house cats, tigers have soft pads on the bottoms of their paws. These pads allow tigers to move silently through the forest. Tigers have long, sharp claws at the ends of their feet. They pull the claws in until they need them. When needed, the claws pop out like knives.

Their big, yellow eyes give tigers sharp sight to help find prey. Tigers see as well as people during the day, and much better than people at night. They also hear very well. They can turn their ears toward sounds.

Tigers have explosive speed. They have strong muscles and long legs that help them move extremely fast over short distances. Their long tails give them balance while running fast. Powerful jaws and sharp teeth help tigers grab and kill prey once they catch it.

Some tigers in zoos and circuses are white with blue eyes. People bred these tigers because white tigers fetch more money from tourists. In the wild, white tigers are very rare. Zoos no longer breed tigers to be white.

## WHAT DO TIGERS EAT?

Tigers eat the largest animals they can catch. They hunt wild boars, deer, wild cows, young elephants, and young rhinos. Tigers also kill farmers' cows and goats. Tigers prefer to avoid people. Sometimes they attack and kill people, but only if they can't find other food. Tigers hunt alone. They usually hunt at night.

Tigers sneak up on their prey. They use the trees and grass to hide. A tiger slowly and silently sneaks until its prey is near. The tiger then lunges, lightning-fast, and grabs the animal in its paws and wrestles it to the ground. It sinks its teeth into the animal's neck to kill it.

The tiger then drags the dead animal to a hiding place. The tiger will eat for two or three days until the meat is gone. On average, a tiger must kill once every eight days to avoid starving. Even though tigers are built to hunt, they are only successful in 1 out of 10 or 20 hunts!

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### WHY DO TIGERS ROAR?

Tigers roar to scare other tigers away. A tiger's roar tells other tigers to keep out of its hunting ground. Tigers also use smells and scratch marks to mark their territory.

### FEW TIGERS REMAIN

Tigers are disappearing in the wild. People pose the biggest threat to tigers. People destroy the tiger's forest home. People have taken away tigers' food. People also hunt tigers for sport and sell their skins and bones. Most countries have passed laws against hunting tigers, but poachers continue to kill them.

A tiger in a zoo can live to be 20 years old. A wild tiger will likely not live to be 15. Only half of the tiger cubs born live long enough to leave their mother. Adult tigers have violent fights with each other. Other animals injure and kill tigers. They can also starve to death when there is no food.

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