

Seals & Sea Lions: Venn Diagram

Objective

Students will create a venn diagram showing sets of the characteristics of seals and sea lions.

Materials

- list of seal and sea lion characteristics as described below

Background

Seals, sea lions, and walruses all belong to a group of animals known as pinnipeds. Scientists categorize pinnipeds as true seals, sea lions, or walruses based on characteristics such as body shape. The information and illustrations below show some of the differences between true seals and sea lions. (Note: Fur seals are grouped with sea lions.)

Like other mammals, pinnipeds are warm-blooded, give live birth, nurse their young, breathe air, and have hair. Pinnipeds also have blubber and sensitive whiskers called vibrissae. Although most of their lives are spent in the water, pinnipeds are dependent on land. They come ashore periodically to rest and bask in the sun, and at least once a year—during their breeding season—most species congregate on beaches or sea ice to give birth and breed.

Action

1. Share the description of true seals and sea lions with your students. Ask them how they would be able to tell the difference between true seals and sea lions.
2. Ask students to create a Venn diagram showing the characteristics of seal and sea lions. Which characteristics are common to both types of animals? Which are specific for each type?

What's the Difference?

	true seals	sea lions & fur seals
head	tiny ear holes, no flaps	small, slim external ear flaps
front flippers	covered with hair; clawlike nails	long, paddlelike, and hairless with short nails
hind flippers	short and paddlelike webbed with nails on all digits can't turn forward	long, paddlelike and hairless webbed with nails on middle three digits can rotate forward to walk on land
movement on land	undulates (caterpillarlike movement)	"walks" on all fours