



Meet the sharks

Lesson plan: a myth-busting quiz and six hands-on stations about how sharks sense their world



Ages	9 to 15
Time	60 minutes
Group	Up to 35 students, in six teams
Where	Any classroom. No internet needed.
You need	The slides, one team sheet per team, one record sheet per student, the six station cards and a few everyday objects (see below)

What students learn

- Many things people say about sharks are myths, and a claim is only as good as the evidence behind it.
- Sharks are fish with a skeleton of cartilage, and their bodies and senses are built for life in the sea.
- Sharks and rays live on reefs in the Philippines, including the reefs MCP monitors in Zamboanguita.
- People are a far bigger danger to sharks than sharks are to people.

Before the lesson

1. Print one **Myth or fact** team sheet per team and one **Super senses** record sheet per student.
2. Print the six station cards (A4 landscape) and set out six stations around the room.
3. Put these on the station tables:
 - **A, Skin like sandpaper:** a piece of sandpaper. Velvet or corduroy is even better, because it feels smooth one way and rough the other, just like shark skin.
 - **B, A skeleton that bends:** nothing. A short piece of rubber hose is a nice extra.
 - **C, The electric sense:** six sheets of paper, a paperclip and a small strong magnet tied to a piece of string.
 - **D, Feeling the water move:** a shallow tray or basin of water and a towel.
 - **E, Eyes for the dark:** a torch and a bicycle reflector, in the darkest corner of the room.
 - **F, Teeth on a conveyor belt:** nothing. Everything is on the card.
4. Optional: a small prize for the winning quiz team.

The lesson

- 1** **Sharks on our reefs 5 minutes, slides 1 and 2.** Show the photos. Ask who has seen a shark or a ray, where, and how it felt. Ask what people at home say about sharks. Explain that MCP volunteers have recorded whale sharks, manta rays, eagle rays and bamboo sharks on the reefs near Zamboanguita, and that today the class will find out which things people say about sharks are true.

- 2 Myth or fact? 15 minutes, slides 3 to 13.** Split the class into six teams and hand out the team sheets. Give teams five minutes to circle M for myth or F for fact for each statement. Then go through the answer slides one at a time. Before each reveal, ask one team to explain their choice, and praise good reasoning even when the answer turns out wrong. Every answer slide says how we know, so keep coming back to the question: what is the evidence?
- 3 Super senses stations 25 minutes, slides 14 to 15.** Keep the same six teams. Each team starts at a different station, spends four minutes there, and moves on at your signal. At each station students do the activity on the card and write their answer on the record sheet. Walk around and ask: What surprised you? Which of your own senses is this most like?
- 4 Put it all together 5 minutes, slide 16.** Ask teams to find each super sense on the labelled shark and say what it is for.
- 5 Who is more dangerous? 8 minutes, slide 17.** Reveal the numbers and give students a moment to take them in. Ask: Why are so many people scared of sharks? Where do our ideas about sharks come from? Why do you think people kill so many? Leave the last question open. It leads into lesson 3.
- 6 Wrap up 2 minutes, slide 18.** Each student tells a partner one shark fact they will share at home.

Answers

Myth or fact: 1 myth, 2 myth, 3 myth, 4 fact, 5 fact, 6 myth, 7 fact, 8 myth, 9 myth, 10 fact.

Stations, what to listen for:

- **A:** shark skin feels rough when you stroke it from tail to head, because the tiny scales all point towards the tail.
 - **B:** cartilage breaks down quickly, so usually only the teeth last long enough to become fossils.
 - **C:** it lets a shark find prey hidden in sand or in the dark, from the tiny electric signals made by the prey's muscles.
 - **D:** at night, in murky water, or when the prey is behind the shark.
 - **E:** many sharks hunt at dusk and at night, when there is little light.
 - **F:** the wide, saw-edged tiger shark tooth can cut through hard things such as turtle shell.
- Matches: 1 sea turtles, 2 small fish, 3 crabs and shrimp, 4 plankton.

Making it easier or harder

- **Younger groups:** run the quiz as a whole class, thumbs up for fact and thumbs down for myth, and use four stations instead of six. A, B, D and E need the least reading.
- **Older groups:** after the quiz, ask each team to pick one statement and say what evidence would change their mind. On slide 17, point out that the two numbers come from different years and that scientists give a range for the shark figure. Ask why a range can be more honest than a single number.
- **Language:** the lesson works in English, Filipino or Bisaya. Shark is *pating* in Filipino and *iho* in Bisaya, and the whale shark is *butanding*.

Safety and good practice

- Keep magnets away from young children who might swallow them, and away from phones and bank cards.
- Wipe up spilled water straight away so nobody slips.
- Please don't bring real shark teeth, jaws or fins to class. Buying them keeps the trade in shark products going, and trading some species is illegal. The drawings on the station cards do the job.

Curriculum links

- **Science:** classifying animals (vertebrates and fish), adaptations, and how animals sense their surroundings.
- **Ocean Literacy Principle 5:** the ocean supports a great diversity of life and ecosystems.
- **Thinking skills:** telling a claim apart from the evidence for it.

The teacher reading has the science behind every slide, with links to the sources.

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