

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Is That Mammal a Carnivore, Herbivore, or Omnivore?

By Guy Belleranti

A mammal can be a carnivore (meat eater), herbivore (plant eater) or omnivore (meat and plant eater). By looking at the teeth, eye position and feet you can usually identify which of the three it is



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If the mammal has either blunt canines or no canines, and has big flat side and back teeth (premolars and molars) it is a herbivore. Herbivores use their molars for crushing and grinding plants.

But what about herbivores that do have large front teeth? Beavers, for example, have huge front incisors. And river hippos have two huge lower canines. Well, beavers use their incisors for chewing through bark, branches and even trees.

think this deer has?



How are a fox's teeth different from a deer's?

And hippos use their canine tusks for defense and fighting, not for chewing. But both beavers and hippos have large flat molars that they use for grinding up plant matter.

If the mammal has a variety of all kinds of teeth (canines, incisors, premolars and molars) it is an omnivore. It has a variety of teeth because it eats a variety of foods, both meat and plants.

Now let's talk about eye position. Carnivorous and omnivorous mammals have eyes in front to



How are a beaver's teeth similar to a fox's? How are they similar to a deer's?



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them hide".

And, finally, there are the differences in feet. Carnivores almost always have claws to hold prey, climb trees, dig for food and fight. They also have soft pads on their feet so they can sneak up on prey. Omnivorous mammals may have claws (like bears), or hands (like primates) for grabbing food. Herbivores, meanwhile, often have hooves to help them run away. Or, like the beaver and capybara, some or all of their feet may be webbed to help them swim away.

Where are the eyes positioned on this wild boar? How does the location of the boar's eyes help it to survive?



How does having webbed feet help the capybara?

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1. Why do carnivores usually have sharp canines and carnassials?

\_\_\_\_\_



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4. Which sentence best describes a carnivore's feet?
- a. Carnivores usually have hooves on their feet.
  - b. Carnivores usually have webbed feet.
  - c. Carnivores usually have soft pads on their feet and claws.
  - d. Carnivores usually have large, flat feet.
5. Tell whether each mammal is a carnivore, omnivore, or herbivore.

Lion \_\_\_\_\_

Bear \_\_\_\_\_

Wolf \_\_\_\_\_

Bison \_\_\_\_\_

Horse \_\_\_\_\_

Human \_\_\_\_\_

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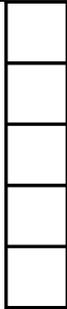
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Use information from the article to help you answer the crossword clues.



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### Across

- 4. animals who hunt other animals
- 8. sharp, curved nails on an animal's foot
- 9. animal that eats only meat

### Down

- 1. animal that eats only plants
- 2. warm-blooded animal with hair or fur
- 3. animal that is hunted and eaten
- 5. back teeth
- 6. animal that eats meat and plants
- 7. front teeth

## ANSWER KEY



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Lion           **carnivore**          

Bear           **omnivore**          

Wolf           **carnivore**          

Bison           **herbivore**          

Horse           **herbivore**          

Human           **omnivore**

## ANSWER KEY



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- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 4. animals who hunt other animals          | 5. back teeth                       |
| 8. sharp, curved nails on an animal's foot | 6. animal that eats meat and plants |
| 9. animal that eats only meat              | 7. front teeth                      |