

# Exhibit Companion

Grades 3 - 4

Topic: Adaptations

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For more information, visit [AdventureAquarium.com](http://AdventureAquarium.com)  
Call 800.616.JAWS to make a group reservation



### **About this Guide:**

Thank you for booking a trip to Adventure Aquarium! This Exhibit Companion contains information and activities to enhance your visit, adding more educational value to an already exciting experience for you and your students. This companion was created to reinforce topics you are already studying in your classroom and stimulate conversations before, during and after your trip to the Aquarium. It is recommended that you read over the packet in its entirety, and distribute the “**At the Aquarium**” section to your chaperones. This section contains discussion questions to be asked at various exhibits throughout the Aquarium, as well as “Not to Miss” exhibits and shows.

For many of your students, this is their first visit to Adventure Aquarium and they may be interacting with animals that they have never seen before. With the help of you and your chaperones, their visit will be filled with fun and learning, and will be an experience they will never forget.

Adventure Aquarium is divided up into four areas, called Zones, to help you easily find your way around the building. This Exhibit Companion is also set up by Zone. The sections of the guide refer to exhibits found in each Zone and how they relate to the topic of this Companion. You may find other exhibits that also relate to the topic while touring the Aquarium. Please have your students and chaperones stop at each one to discuss the animals and their exhibit. Your students will gain more from your trip by taking the time to look, listen, and experience each exhibit, rather than racing through the building!

Adventure Aquarium is constantly updating and adding to our exhibits and collections. Please refer back to these documents prior to each visit, as they will also be updated to reflect changes at Adventure Aquarium.

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**This Guide Includes:**

- Activities to prepare your students for their visit and to reinforce topics addressed after they have visited.
- Descriptions of the exhibits that will be the focus of this Exhibit Companion and the animals they contain. Please note: while we make every effort to keep the animal list up to date, we are always adding to and adjusting our collections. Please ask an Adventure Aquarium cast member if you are unsure about the identity of a particular animal. We are always happy to help.
- Discussion questions about the animals in the exhibits and adaptations they have for survival in their habitats.

**Objectives:**

After the visit, students will be able to:

- Define adaptation and describe reasons that animals have developed adaptations (adaptations can be used for feeding, defense, reproduction, locomotion, etc).
- Understand the difference between a physical and behavioral adaptation.
- Describe some physical and some behavioral adaptations that animals can utilize.

**Standards:**

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| NGSS         | 4-LS1-1, 5-LS2-1   |
| New Jersey   | 5.1B, 5.1C, 5.1D, 5.3A, 5.3B, 5.3D   |
| Pennsylvania | 3.1.4.A2, 3.1.5.B1, 3.1.4.C2, 3.1.5.C2, 4.1.4.A, 4.1.5.C, 4.5.4.D, 4.2.4.C |
| Delaware     | SS, SS7, SS8   |

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## **Background Information - Adaptations**

An ADAPTATION is a physical feature an animal has or behavior that an animal uses to help it survive in its habitat. Examples of adaptations include migration (behavioral) or camouflage (physical). Humans also have adaptations, whether we are aware of them or not. Our teeth are designed to help us eat a variety of foods; we shiver when we are cold and sweat when we are hot; our hands are designed to grasp and our feet to help us walk upright.

Many adaptations help an animal to find food, or prevent it from becoming food. A strong sense of smell allows a shark to find injured prey in the water. Sonar allows bats to find insects in the dark. Migration gives birds a better chance of finding food during different times of the year. The striped pattern of a zebra helps it escape a lion by confusing the lion's eyes and letting the zebra blend in with other members of the herd. An opossum will play dead when threatened by a predator.

There are countless examples of adaptations that animals display. Some animals, like deer and foxes, cope with cold weather by growing a thicker coat. Others simply leave the cold weather behind and migrate, like robins and geese. Still others, like groundhogs and chipmunks, hibernate.

Adaptations often take thousands of years to become evident within a population. Those that increase the animal's chance of survival are passed on to future generations, while those that do not eventually fade away.

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## Preparing for Your Visit:

*In addition to using this guide, you can enhance your visit with a specially themed educational program. Ask about scheduling a classroom program such as **Sharks!**, **Food Web**, **SeaSTEM Lab – Oil Pollution Solution**, or a **Ocean Realm Tour**.*

A little preparation before the day of your field trip can set expectations and prepare your students to make the most of the visit. Visit [www.adventureaquarium.com](http://www.adventureaquarium.com) and view our interactive map. Familiarize yourself with the layout of the Aquarium, and advise your chaperones to do the same. It is easier to find the exhibits you will be focusing on if you know where you will be going and what shows and classes you will be attending. A handout of the daily show schedule is available at check-in and the Information Desk.

Adventure Aquarium has a variety of animals with amazing adaptations on display. Most of them are aquatic (water-dwelling) animals such as sharks, hippos, stingrays and fish.

Since many of the animals you will be observing are fish, review the characteristics that set apart a fish from another animal. Animals that are fish have fins, gills, and a backbone. Without all three, an animal cannot be considered a fish. Jellyfish, cuttlefish, and starfish do not have fins, gills, or a backbone so they are not considered fish, despite having “fish” in their names. Whales and dolphins have body shapes similar to fish, and even have “fins” (more properly called flippers), but are mammals and must surface to breathe air.

Use the Internet to find pictures of different fish and animals that are not fish. Below is a list of some suggested animals to get you started and a special adaptation that they have. Discuss with your class if the animals are indeed fish. Many fish have different body styles to help them survive. Eels have long, skinny bodies for slinking through coral reefs, while tuna are streamlined to help them swim quickly through the water. Sharks and stingrays are also fish but have a skeleton made of cartilage, unlike bony fish such as clownfish or goldfish which have a skeleton made of bone.

- Moray Eel – is a fish. This fish does not have scales, but is instead covered with a slimy mucous that protects their skin. The Green Moray Eel actually has blue skin, but is covered with a yellow slime, making them look green.
- Clownfish – is a fish. Clownfish have a special relationship with anemones that allows them to swim in the anemone without getting stung by their many stinging tentacles.
- Catfish – is a fish. Catfish have whiskers, called barbels, which they use to feel around in the mud to help them find food.
- Starfish – is not a fish. They do not have fins, gills and a backbone. At the Aquarium, we call them seastars (because they live in the sea and are shaped like a star).
- Great White Shark – is a fish. See the section on the “Shark Realm” exhibit in this guide to learn about shark adaptations.
- Jellyfish – is not a fish. Jellyfish are invertebrates and use stinging cells to stun their food. You can see several species of jellyfish at the Aquarium in the Jules Verne Gallery during your visit.

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- Sword fish – is a fish. This billed fish will use its sword-like nose by shaking its head back and forth in a school of fish, stunning them.
- Flounder – is a fish. This flattened fish is often found on the bottom, hiding under the sand. Both of its eyes are located on the top (dorsal) side of its body.
- Tuna – is a fish. The streamlined body of the tuna makes it the fastest fish in the ocean.
- Dolphin – is not a fish. Dolphins are mammals and have a blowhole located on the top of their heads. They must breathe air using lungs, and therefore swim to the surface of the water to take a breath.

Discuss the differences between behavioral adaptations and physical adaptations. Have students use what they already know about the animals above to determine other adaptations not mentioned, and whether they are physical or behavioral.

### At the Aquarium:

While at the Aquarium, your students will be examining different animals and the adaptations they display. Below are some different exhibits you will find at the Aquarium and questions (indicated by a “light bulb”) that you can ask your students while looking at the exhibits. The exhibits are broken down by Zone.

#### Zone A – [Shipwrecked](#) and [Ocean Realm](#)

[Horseplay](#) – [Seahorses](#) are the slowest swimming fish in the ocean. While they have a different body arrangement than fish you might see in other exhibits, they are fish. Their special body plan helps them survive in their grassy ocean habitat. Because they are such slow swimmers, it is possible for them to get carried away by ocean currents. They have developed a prehensile tail (much like a monkey’s) that they can use to wrap around the grasses and keep from drifting away.

The male seahorse is responsible for carrying the eggs until they hatch. He has a special pouch, called a brood pouch, into which the female deposits her eggs. He will hold onto the eggs in the pouch until they hatch.



💡 Look closely at the seahorse’s skin. Does it have scales or does something else cover its skin? If it doesn’t have scales, is it truly a fish?

- *Seahorses do not have scales, but instead are covered with bony plates. However, they are fish! Remember, as long as it has fins, gills and a backbone, it is a fish. Other fish, like eels and catfish, are covered with slime instead of scales.*

💡 Although they are slow swimmers, seahorses do swim. Observe the animals in the exhibit for a few moments. How do they swim?

- *Seahorses flutter their dorsal fins (located on their back) to propel them through the water, and use their pectoral fins (located near their eyes) to help them to steer.*

#### Zone B – [Stingray Beach Club](#)

[Stingrays](#) – Stingrays are a cartilaginous fish related to sharks. They have a flattened body design, with their gills and mouths located on the ventral (bottom) side of their bodies. They are mostly bottom feeders, preferring food like clams, mussels, and crabs and use flat, crushing teeth to crush the shells of these prey items.

Most rays are solitary, and spend much of their time buried under the sand. Others, like the Cownose ray, swim throughout the middle of the water column in large schools.

The most notable adaptation of the stingray is the barb located on the tail. It is used for protection against predators such as sharks. It is sharp, often serrated, and sometimes venomous. However, stingrays are very docile and usually when humans get “stung,” it is due to startling the ray. Most often, humans are stung in the foot, leg or ankle because they step on rays hiding underneath the sand.

- 💡 What is the purpose of the holes located behind the stingrays' eyes?
  - *The holes behind the eyes of the stingray are called spiracles. Because the stingray's gills are located on their ventral (bottom) side and they spend much of their time buried in or laying on the sand, they use these spiracles to draw water from above them, rather than sucking up sand when they breathe.*
- 💡 What is an example of a behavioral adaptation that the stingray exhibits?
  - *Stingrays will cover themselves with sand to hide from predators. They wriggle their wing-like pectoral fins until a layer of sand covers them, leaving their spiracles and eyes exposed. Some rays, like the Cownose rays, swim in large schools. Schooling gives them more eyes to see predators, prey, and potential mates.*



### Zone C – [KidZone](#)

[Clownfish](#) – The clownfish is one of the most recognizable fish in the ocean. They are a brightly colored, coral reef dwelling fish, and have a special symbiotic (mutually beneficial) relationship with anemones. Clownfish are slow swimmers, and depend upon the anemone for protection from predators. The anemone, in return, gets cleaned of parasites, increased water circulation (by the clownfish swimming in and out of it), and food – sometimes other fish are lured into the anemone by the clownfish's presence, other times the clownfish will actually bring food to the anemone and feed it.

The clownfish is protected from the anemone's stinging cells by a mucus coating on their skin. They must acclimate to the anemone by rubbing their bodies against its tentacles until they become immune to the stinging.

- 💡 Is the relationship between the clownfish and the anemone an example of a behavioral or physical adaptation? Why?
- *It is actually both! The clownfish's choice to live within the anemone is an example of behavioral, while its ability to become immune to the stinging of the anemone's tentacles is an example of physical.*



- 💡 Do you think that anemones that have clownfish living with them are better off than anemones that do not have clownfish partners? What about clownfish that do not have anemones?
- *Scientists have observed that anemones do better with a host fish than without. The many benefits increase the anemone's chance of survival, and juvenile clownfish strongly depend upon finding an anemone in which to live.*

#### Zone D – [Dinosaurs of the Deep](#) & [Shark Realm](#)

Octopus – The [Giant Pacific Octopus](#) is one of the largest species of octopus. It is found in cave habitats, is solitary, and can live between 3-5 years in the wild. It eats a variety of crustaceans including shrimp, crabs, and lobster. They can change color and even texture using special cells in their skin, which helps them to blend in to their habitat. They prefer living in caves, and can squeeze into a hole about the size of their eye (about the size of a golf ball).

- 💡 What special feature does an octopus have that helps it cling to the rocks, its food, and even the glass in its enclosure?
- *Octopus' arms are covered with tentacles that help them stick to things. These tentacles are sensitive and help the octopus feel around its habitat. An octopus' brain extends into the top portion of each arm.*
- 💡 Sometimes you'll see toys in the octopus exhibit. Why do you think that they're there?
- *Octopuses are very smart and can even solve puzzles. We give our octopus toys to keep it from becoming bored.*



[Shark Realm](#) – The Shark Realm exhibit will surround you with 30 sharks – [Nurse sharks](#), [Sand Tiger sharks](#), and [Sandbar sharks](#). There are over 375 known species of sharks that range in size from the 6-inch Cigar shark to the 60-foot Whale shark. Sharks are some of the best-adapted animals on earth. They come in different shapes and patterns, and their teeth are continuously replaced throughout their lives.

Based on what they eat, their teeth can be:

- Dagger-like -- like the Sand Tiger, for catching fish,
- Triangular and serrated -- like the Great White, for biting off chunks of seals, or
- Flattened -- like those of the Smooth Dogfish, for crunching shellfish.

💡 Look closely at the shark's coloration. Why do you think the sharks have light bellies and dark backs?

- *This pattern of light bellies and dark backs is called countershading, which is like a two-tone camouflage. If an animal swims beneath the shark and looks up, the light belly blends in with the sunlight, making them harder to be seen. If an animal is swimming above them and looks down, its dark back blends in with the dark ocean floor. This makes it harder for the shark to be seen by its prey, or in the case of smaller sharks, its predators.*

💡 Sharks' skeletons are made out of cartilage, the same thing that your ears are made of. Is this hard like a bone, or flexible? Why do you think having a skeleton made out of cartilage would be an advantage?

- *A shark's cartilage skeleton makes them extremely flexible. When chasing prey, they can turn quickly, almost bending their bodies in half. A cartilage skeleton also makes them lighter than they would be if they had bony skeletons, making it easier for them to stay buoyant in the water. Cartilage also heals faster than bone, so if a shark is injured, he's back on his fins more quickly.*





**Don't Miss:**

**Touch Exhibits**

- Please Note: Touch exhibits close for 15 minutes every hour to give our animals a well-deserved break. If the exhibit is closed upon your arrival, please check with a cast member at the exhibit to see when it will be re-opened.
- Review with your students prior to arrival the best way to touch our animals. For all exhibits, we encourage a “two-finger” touch, gently on the animal’s back. Listen for more tips from cast members at the exhibit.

[Touch-A-Shark](#) – Your students will be thrilled to actually touch beautiful Indo Pacific Brown-banded and White-Spotted Bamboo Sharks in the TOUCH-A-SHARK exhibit. And all they have to do is stick their hand in the water — if they dare.

[Stingray Beach Club](#) – Touchable stingrays glide past this multi-level exhibit, with touch areas for both tall and small visitors.

[Shows and Feedings](#) – *please check your show schedule for times and locations*

[Hippo Feed and Talk](#) – Watch as our biologists provide a Q & A and toss treats to Nile Hippos, Button and Genny.

[Meet the Divers!](#) – Meet members of Adventure Aquarium's dive team and find out what keeps them moving through the water.

[Penguin Feeding & Talk](#) – Penguins eat 20 percent of their body weight in one sitting! Watch it happen live during one of our daily feeds and hear our biologists talk about these fascinating creatures.

**After Your Visit: Questions to Ask and Things to Do:**

1. Have students give five examples of the adaptations of ONE animal they have observed on their visit. They can choose mammals, birds, fish, or invertebrates for their featured animals.
2. Pick a particular habitat (ocean, desert, underground, grassland, tidepool, lake) and list what adaptations an animal may have to optimize survival in this habitat.
3. Do you think vertebrates like mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish have developed more sophisticated adaptations than invertebrates like arthropods and mollusks? Ask each student to select an animal for his/her choice and list all the adaptations (behavioral AND physical) for the animal they choose. See a sample worksheet on Page 15. They can also draw their animal and habitat on the reverse side of the form.

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