

Animals We Love:

MANATEES

Recommended for preschoolers

Let's learn more about manatees:

1

Manatees are aquatic mammals. They breathe through lungs like we do. They surface from the water every 3 to 5 minutes to breathe although they can hold their breath underwater for 20 minutes, keeping their nostrils closed. After giving birth underwater, mother manatee must help its calf reach the water surface for its first breath.



2

Manatees are also called sea cows because of their eating habit. They spend 6 to 8 hours a day grazing on aquatic plants. They can munch up to 100kg of food daily.



Manatees open their nose flaps to breathe.

3

Manatees are related to elephants. The nails on their flippers look like elephants' toenails. When their molar teeth wear out, new teeth push forward from the back of the mouth, similar to the way elephants replace their molar teeth. Manatees grow their teeth all their life.

4

Manatees fart a lot and they even have fart-storage pouches - all because farting is important to keep them buoyant in water.

5

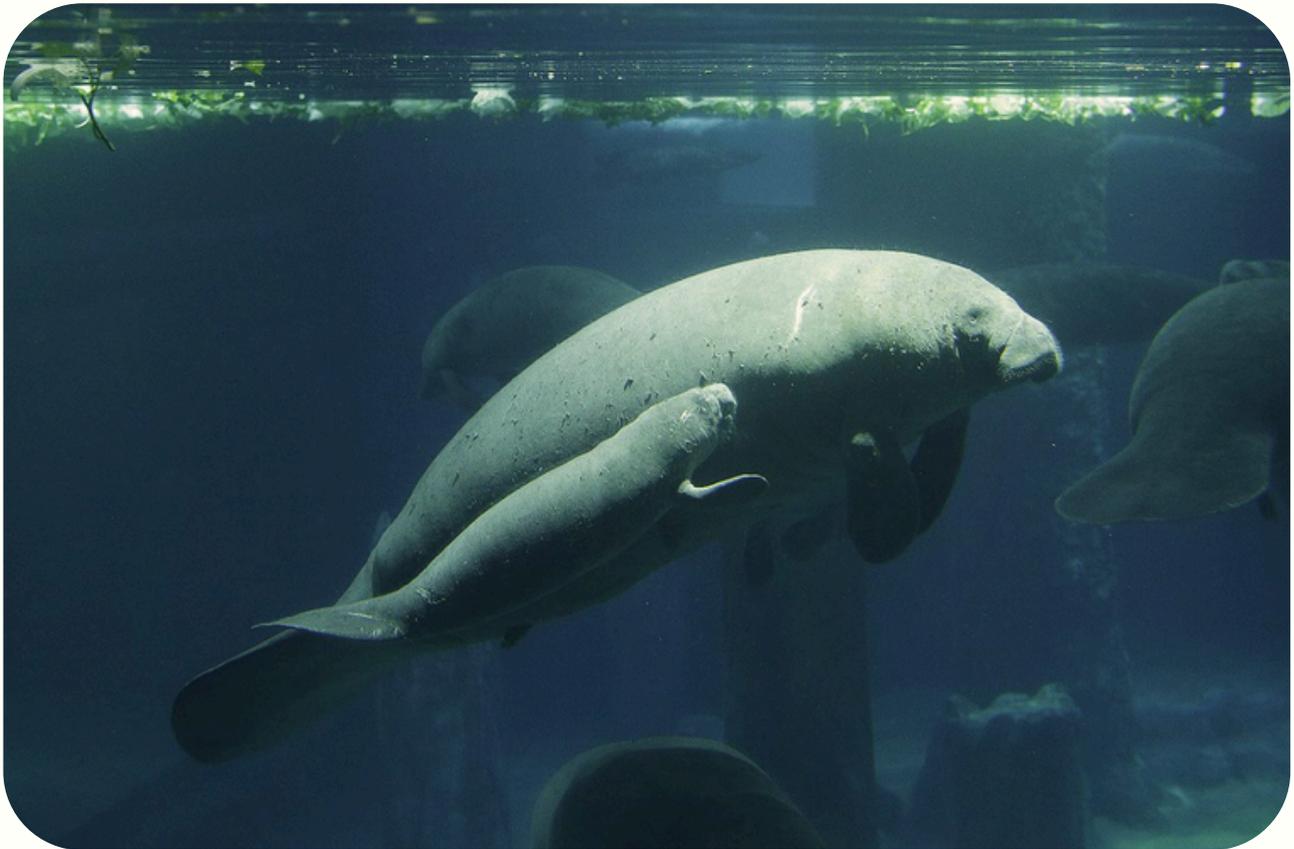
Eva is our largest manatee. She weighs about 1,200 kg and is 3.5 m long. She is mother to eight offspring and a grandmother of two.



EVA

Use the See-Think-Wonder Thinking Routine* to start a conversation with your child

*Adapted from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education



SEE

- How many manatees can you spot in this photograph?
- Point out their eyes, flippers, tail, nostrils, and whiskers.
- Which objects in your house remind you of the manatee's tail?

THINK

- What do you think the baby manatee might be doing?
- If you were the first person to discover the manatee, what do you think might be a good name for this animal?

WONDER

- How big can a manatee grow?

Activity Time!

Manatee Groove



2 or more players



Just your body

STEP 1: Watch the [video](#) and visit [River Wonders web page on manatees](#). Focus on one manatee. Observe its shape and body parts.

STEP 2: Gather a few family members to form ONE manatee, using different body parts to represent the manatee's head, flippers and tail. Try to move from one end of the room to the other as one manatee.



Salt Dough Manatee



At least 1 adult and 1 child



2 cups flour, 1 cup water, 1 cup salt and a mixing bowl

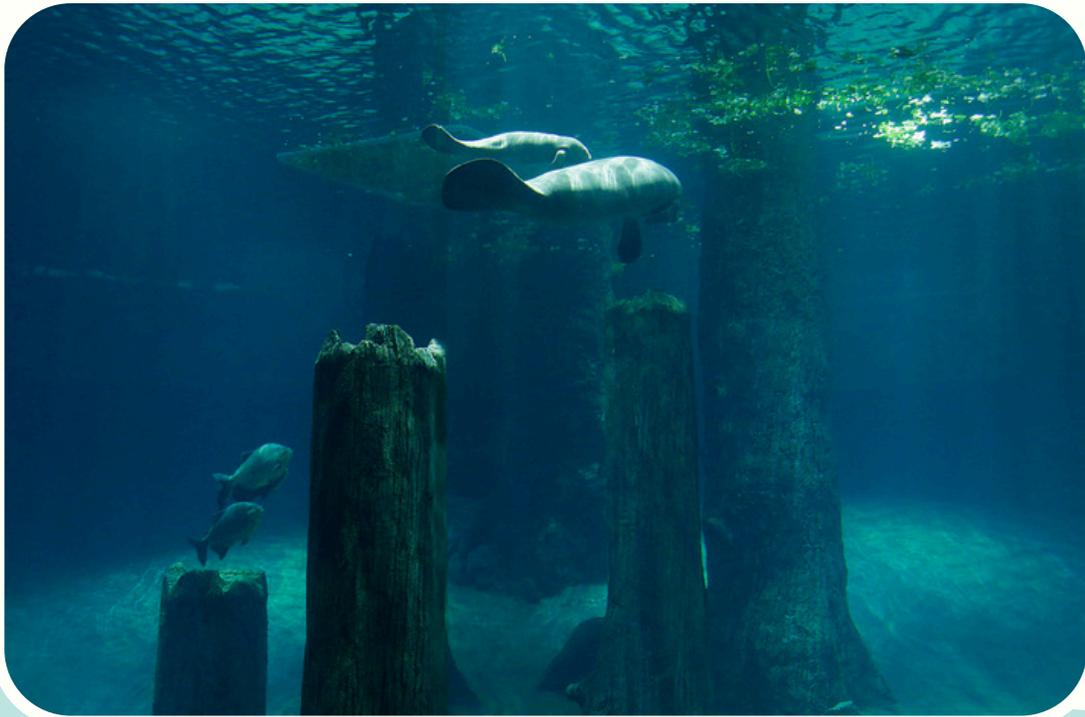
STEP 1: Mix 2 cups of flour, 1 cup of salt and 1 cup of water together to make a salt dough.

STEP 2: Observe the shapes and sizes of the manatees in the photograph, and form a manatee using the dough.

STEP 3: Make more manatees of different shapes and sizes. Allow your salt dough creations to dry and harden before you play with them.



Try out this activity when you visit us!



Manatee Charades



2 or more
players



Just your body

STEP 1: Look closely at the manatee tank. What animals can you spot? What objects do you see (e.g. tree stump, vegetable)?

STEP 2: Each person to choose at least two animals in the manatee tank. Take turns to act it out for others to guess. Can you guess them all?

STEP 3: Level up the game by acting out objects in the manatee tank.