

Learning Guide



Bears

We hope you enjoyed learning all about where and how different species of bears live, and how you might overcome your fear of bears. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen

Answer TRUE or FALSE statements before and after listening to the episode.
Reflect on how your thinking about bears has changed after listening to the episode.

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.3

Writing Prompts

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1, W.3-8.2, W.3-8.3, W.3-8.4, W.3-8.7, W.3-8.8

Types of Bears: Resource Sheet & Writing Projects

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3-8.2, RI.3-8.1, RI.3-8.2, W.3-8.2; NGSS 3-LS4-3-4

Bear Habitat Map

NGSS 3-LS4-3, MS-LS2-1; CCSS: SL.3-8.2

What Does a Bear Eat? Activity

NGSS 3-LS4-3, 3-LS4-4, MS-LS2-1, MS-LS4-4; CCSS:SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.2, W.3-8.2

Build a Bear Den

NGSS 3-LS4-3, MS-LS1-4, MS-LS2-1, MS-LS4-4; VA:Cr2.1; CCSS.SL.3.2-8, SL.3-8.4

Bear Behavior Activities

NGSS 4-LS1-1, MS-LS1-4; CCSS.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.2, W.6-8.1; TH:Cr1.1

Would You Rather? Space Edition

CCSS W.3-8.1, RST.3-8.1, SL.3-8.4

Additional Resources & Book List



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

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<https://www.childrenshour.org/bears/>



Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!

Read each statement and write TRUE or FALSE based on what you already know.



2. After listening!

Based on what the experts said in the episode, write TRUE or FALSE.



Before Listening	TRUE or FALSE?	After Listening
	1. Black bears eat only meat.	
	2. Bears sometimes eat bees and honey.	
	3. Bears are mostly solitary animals.	
	4. Black bears can sometimes be brown, cinnamon, or even white in color.	
	5. All bears live in caves.	
	6. Bears can communicate through different sounds.	
	7. Bears are intelligent animals with different behaviors and emotions.	

What did you learn?



Get Set to Listen

Answer key

1. FALSE. They eat many foods, including berries, nuts, insects, and vegetation.
2. TRUE
3. TRUE
4. TRUE
5. FALSE. Bears can make dens in many different places.
6. TRUE
7. TRUE



Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!



Write down your response to the question below. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished.

- **This is what I know and how I feel about bears:**

2. After listening!



Write down your response to the following question. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished. Dr. Rogers explained that his opinion of bears changed as he learned more about them.

- **How has your opinion about bears changed after learning more about them in this episode?**



Vocabulary

Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to [the episode](#). Note how the speaker uses the words.

Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

biologist

A scientist who studies living things.

solitary

Living or spending time alone rather than in groups.



Vocabulary

bond

To form a strong connection or relationship with someone or something.

data

Facts or information collected for study.

muzzle

The part of an animal's face around its nose and mouth.

den

A sheltered place where a wild animal lives or rests.



Discussion Questions

1. Are you afraid of bears? Did your feelings change after listening to this episode?
2. Dr. Rogers says he learned to understand bears' behavior in terms of their fear rather than his fear. What do you think he means by this?
3. Why do you think bears might lunge, blow, or slap the ground when they are scared or anxious?
4. What surprised you most about what bears eat? Were there any foods you did not expect bears to eat?
5. The episode explains that bears can communicate through sounds such as tongue clicking, blowing, and mourning sounds. Why is communication important for animals?
6. A mother bear made a mourning sound when one of her cubs was missing. How did this change the way you think about animals and their emotions?
7. The episode says that some bears are becoming less afraid of people. Why could this create problems for both bears and humans?

Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Writing Prompts

Narrative Prompts

1. Write a story from the point of view of a bear. Describe what it is like to live in the wild and interact with humans.
2. Write a letter from [Larry the Polar Bear](#) to his keeper. Explain how he feels about leaving the zoo and experiencing Alaska. Include sensory details.

Informational/Expository Prompts

1. Write an informational paragraph about one type of bear. Include its habitat, food, appearance, and interesting facts.

Extension: Turn your paragraph into a poem, song, or rap!

2. What should people do if they encounter a bear in the wild? Why is it important to respect wild animals?
3. Explain how bears communicate. Use examples of sounds or behaviors from the episode.

Opinion/Persuasive Prompts

1. Why do you think people are often afraid of bears? Is that fear reasonable? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think zoos are a good place for bears? Use evidence from the episode to support your opinion.
3. What responsibilities do humans have toward wild animals and their habitats?
4. Are bears really “dangerous,” or are humans sometimes misunderstanding their behavior? Explain your thinking using evidence from the episode.



Types of Bears

Listen

- Part 1: What Is a Bear? Types, Habitats, Diet, and Bear Safety
 - segments (12:40-18:34) + (35:52-40:49)
- [“Bear Song” by Key Wilde & Mr. Clarke on *Animal Tales* album](#)

Research

- [8 Different Types of Bears + Fun Facts, FAQs & Learning Ideas](#)
- [Compare the Bears](#)
- [Science Trek: Bears](#)

Watch

- [PBS: Science Trek: Bear Types](#)
- [Bears for Kids](#)

Write

Write an informational paragraph about one type of bear. Include its habitat, food, appearance, and interesting facts.

Extend

- Turn your paragraph into a poem, song, or rap.
- Create a Bear Trading Card with the information you learned about one or more of the types of bears.
- Use the **“Build a Bear Den”** activity in this Learning Guide to help you design the perfect home for your chosen bear.





Bear Habitat Map

Listen

- Part 1: What Is a Bear? Types, Habitats, Diet, and Bear Safety
 - segments (12:40-18:34) + (35:52-40:49)

Examine

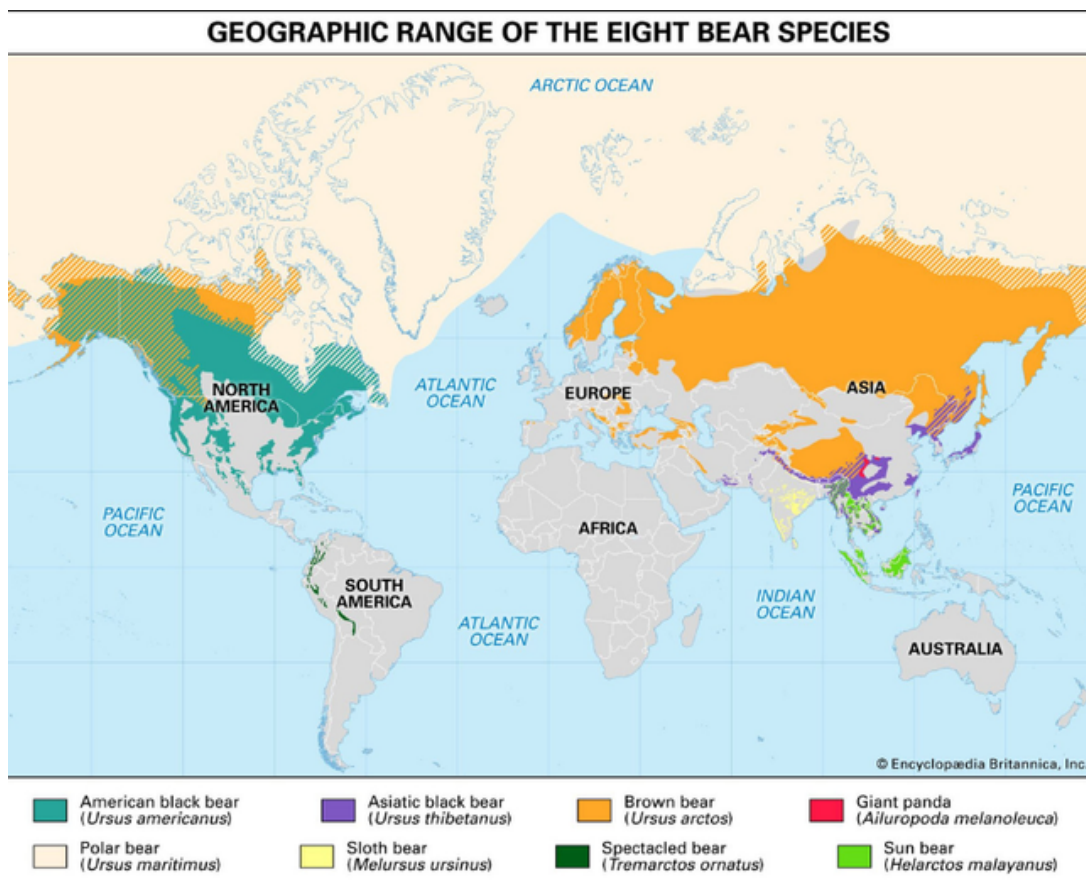
[Geographic Range of the Eight Bear Species map.](#)

- What do you know about the environment in each part of the world?
Consider: climate, terrain, and types of plants and animals

Research

Use the “**Types of Bears**” resource sheet and “**What Does a Bear Eat?**” activity in this Learning Guide to learn more about the bears that live all over the world:

- What adaptations does each type of bear have that make it well suited to live in its particular habitat?
- Why do different types of bears live in such different environments?



View [original Image](#)



What Does a Bear Eat?

Listen

- Part 1: What Is a Bear? Types, Habitats, Diet, and Bear Safety
 - segments (12:40-18:34) + (35:52-40:49)

Sorting Challenge

Cut out the “Bear Cards” and “Food Cards”. Match each food card to the bear or bears that may eat it. **Some foods can be matched with more than one bear.**

Remember: *Although certain bears have favorite foods, many bears are opportunistic omnivores and will eat almost anything if their favorite foods aren’t available!*

Discuss

- *Why do different bears eat different foods?*
- *How does a bear's habitat affect what it can eat?*
- *How does eating a wide variety of foods help bears survive?*
- *Panda bears are endangered. Why do you think this might be?*
- *Why does the giant panda eat so much bamboo?*
- *Which bear do you think has the most unusual diet? Why?*
- *If you were a bear, which food from the cards would you choose?*

Create a Bear Menu

Choose one bear and create a one-day menu for it. Include at least three foods the bear could realistically eat.

Example:

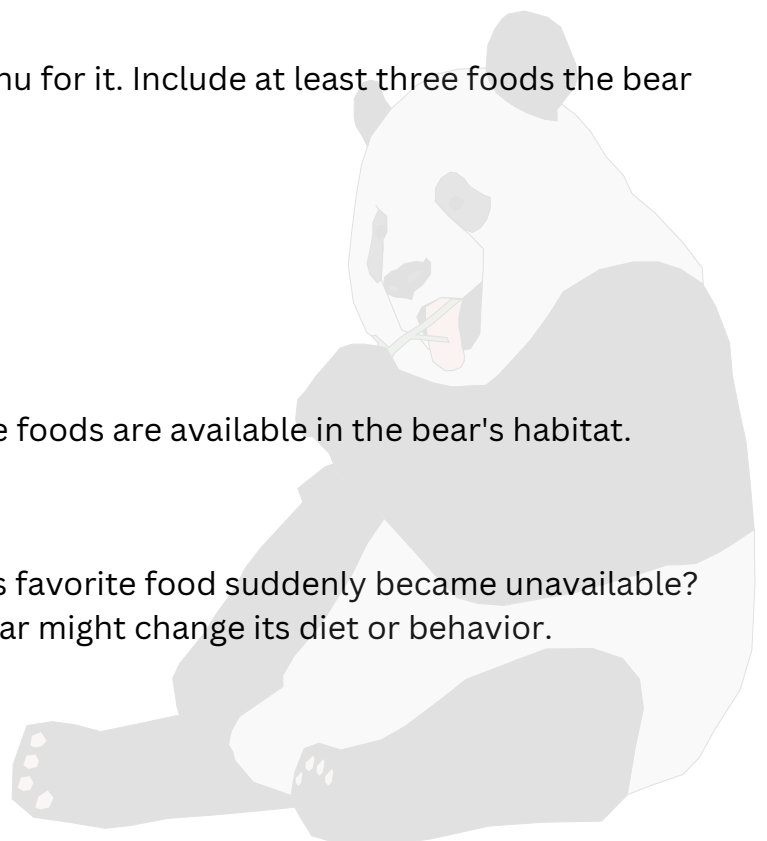
Black Bear's Menu

- *Breakfast: Berries*
- *Lunch: Nuts and insects*
- *Dinner: Grass and berries*

Illustrate your menu and explain why those foods are available in the bear's habitat.

Write

What do you think would happen if a bear's favorite food suddenly became unavailable? Write 2–3 sentences explaining how the bear might change its diet or behavior.

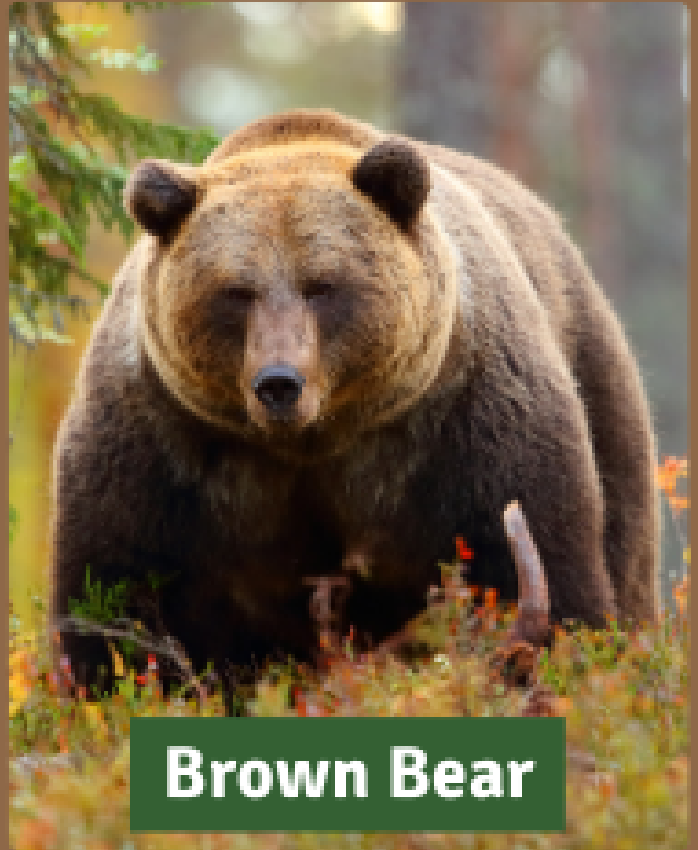




Bear Cards What Does a Bear Eat?



American Black Bear



Brown Bear



Moon Bear



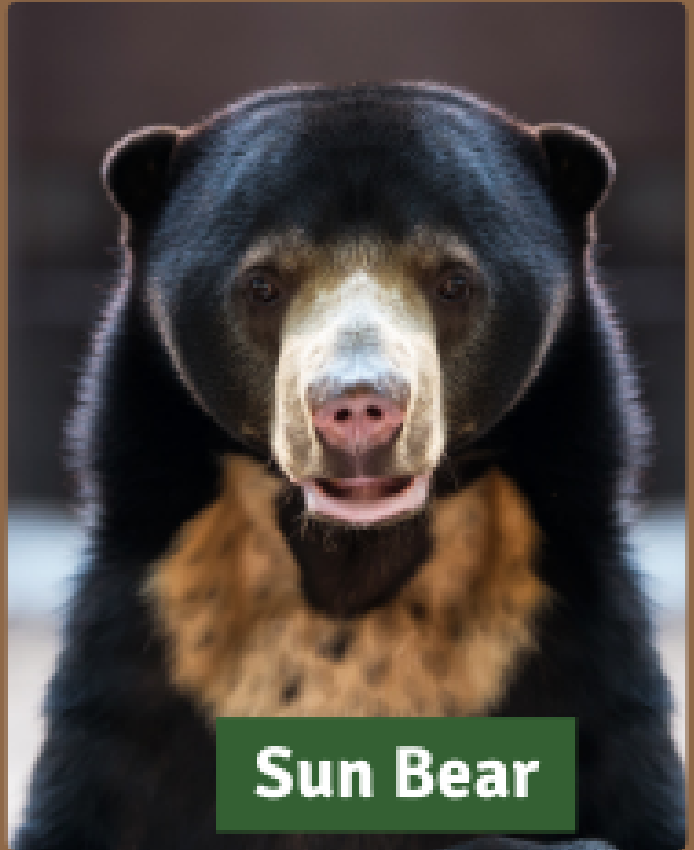
Panda Bear



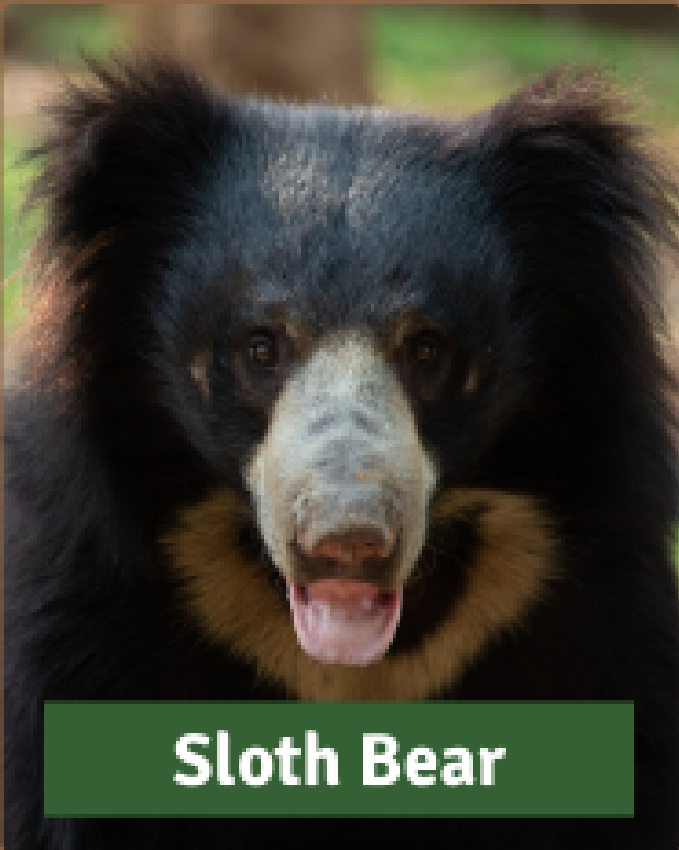
Bear Cards What Does a Bear Eat?



Polar Bear



Sun Bear



Sloth Bear



Spectacled Bear



Food Cards What Does a Bear Eat?



Leaves



Fish Eggs



Fruits



Seals



Roots



Small Creatures



Food Cards What Does a Bear Eat?



Berries



Nuts



Fish



Insects



Bamboo



Honey



What Does a Bear Eat?

Answer Key

Black Bear

Berries
Nuts
Leaves
Insects
Honey
Fish
Tuber Roots
Fish Eggs

Black bears prefer high-calorie, sugar- and fat-rich foods like nuts, acorns, soft fruits, and berries, which make up about 85% to 90% of their natural diet. Although they are omnivores, meat makes up a small fraction of their intake unless preferred plant foods are hard to find.

Brown Bear

Fish
Fish Eggs
Berries
Vegetation
Insects
Nuts
Grass
Honey
Tuber Roots

Brown bears are opportunistic omnivores that prefer high-calorie foods like salmon, sweet berries, succulent green plants, nuts, and small mammals, adapting their specific menu to what is locally and seasonally available.

Panda Bear

Bamboo

Bamboo makes up 99% of a panda's daily diet. They eat different parts of the bamboo plant depending on the season, choosing tender shoots, leafy greens, or tough stems to get enough food. Pandas have to eat almost constantly to get enough calories from the bamboo.

Polar Bear

Seals
Fish

Polar bears prefer to eat seals, especially ringed seals and bearded seals. They need the thick layer of fat, or blubber, under a seal's skin to get enough energy to survive in the cold Arctic.



What Does a Bear Eat?

Answer Key

Sun Bear

Honey
Fruits
Leaves
Insects
Small Creatures

Sun bears love honey the most, which is why people call them "honey bears". They are opportunistic omnivores that eat a wide mix of forest foods. Their favorite foods rely on their sharp claws and long tongues.

Sloth Bear

Insects
Honey
Fruits

Sloth bears prefer eating termites and ants, which make up over 50% to 95% of their year-round diet. They also have a famous, intense craving for honey and honeycombs as a special treat.

Moon Bear

Honey
Fruits
Leaves
Nuts

Moon bears are omnivores with a heavily plant-based diet. Their absolute favorite high-value treat is wild honey, which they actively seek out. Aside from honey, they strongly prefer seasonal fruits, nuts, acorns, succulent shoots, and tender leaves.

Spectacled Bear

Fruits
Leaves
Roots

Spectacled bears (also called Andean bears) are mostly vegetarian. Their absolute favorite foods are juicy fruits and the tender, starchy hearts of bromeliads.



Build a Bear Den

Listen

- Part 1: What Is a Bear? Types, Habitats, Diet, and Bear Safety
 - segments (12:40-18:34) + (35:52-40:49)

Design Challenge

Imagine you are a bear looking for a place to sleep and raise your cubs. Use the materials provided to design and build a bear den. Think about the needs of the bear as you build.

Materials

Paper, cardboard, blocks, recycled materials, craft sticks, cotton balls, leaves, fabric scraps, tape, glue, or other craft supplies.

Consider

- How will the bear stay warm? _____

- How will it stay dry? _____

- How will it stay safe? _____

- Where will the cubs sleep? _____

Share Your Design

When your den is finished, explain your design:

- Where will the bear enter the den?
- Where will the cubs sleep?
- What materials did you use?
- How does your den keep the bear warm, dry, and safe?
- Why did you choose that location?



Bear Behavior

“As I got to know more about bears, I started thinking about their behavior in terms of their fear rather than my fear. And if I’d see a bear jump towards me and slam its feet down and blow, look really scary, I’d say, ‘I’m sorry Bear, here let me lay down. Do you feel better now?’ What I wanted to do for research was to be trusted...so I would act in ways that would build trust, not build fear.” — Dr. Lynn Rogers, bear biologist

Listen

- Part 3: Learning About Bear Behavior
 - segment (24:52-31:57)
- Part 4: Bear Sounds: How Bears Communicate
 - segment (43:15-48:57)



Bear Behavior Detective

You are a bear biologist, and your job is to determine what different bear behaviors might communicate.

Describe, look at images, or play clips of different bear behaviors, such as:

- Slapping the ground
- Blowing
- Lunging
- Clacking jaws
- Tongue clicking
- Mourning sounds
- Nursing
- Ignoring people

Write

Create a short “Bear Dictionary” explaining what different bear sounds and behaviors mean.

Bear Behavior Charades

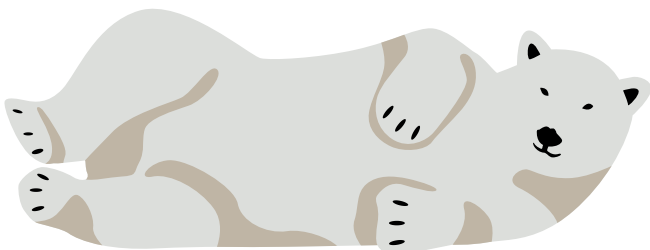
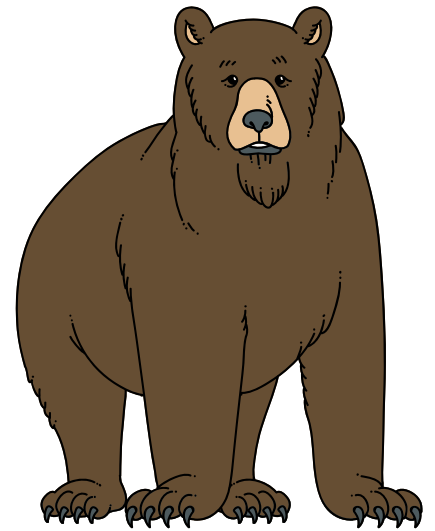
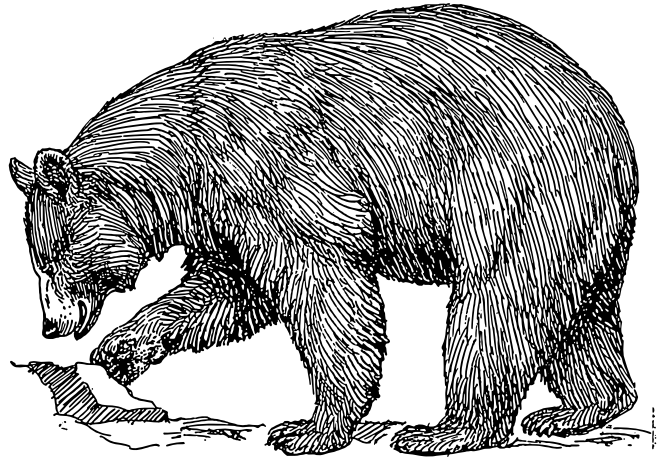
Write bear behaviors on slips of paper. Take turns acting them out without speaking while everyone else guesses.

Examples:

- Eating berries
- Climbing a tree
- Digging a den
- Swimming
- Looking for food
- Caring for cubs
- Feeling nervous
- Exploring a new habitat



Bear Behavior





Would You Rather? Bear Edition

Listen

- Part 1: What Is a Bear? Types, Habitats, Diet, and Bear Safety
 - segments (12:40-18:34) + (35:52-40:49)
- Part 3: Learning About Bear Behavior
 - segment (24:52-31:57)
- Part 4: Bear Sounds: How Bears Communicate
 - segment (43:15-48:57)

The Rules

*In each of the following scenarios, choose **one** option (you can't say "both", even if they are both awesome!)*

Then, give evidence or reasoning for your choice.

The Scenarios

- Would you rather watch a polar bear or watch a black bear?

- Would you rather live in a bear den or live in a tree?

- Would you rather eat berries or eat fish?

- Would you rather study bears or study chimpanzees?

- Would you rather observe a bear from far away or watch one through a webcam?



Additional Resources

[8 Different Types of Bears + Fun Facts, FAQs & Learning Ideas](#)

A good summary of each type of bear, as well as links to download a free coloring page and crossword. Warning: this article contains ads.

[Compare the Bears](#)

This bulleted article from Time for Kids compares 3 types of bears: giant panda, polar bear, and brown bear. Great for K-1!

[National Park Service: Bears](#)

This collection of resources focuses on bear safety and includes photos, audio recordings, videos, an educator's guide, and curriculum materials for teachers.

[Britannica Kids: Bear](#)

A good general overview for kids.

[Science Trek: Bears](#)

From videos and a podcast to a fact-filled article and list of additional resources, this is a great resource for learning about bears!

[North American Bear Center](#)

Our guest, Dr. Lynn Rogers's black bear educational facility. Their mission is to advance the long-term survival of bears worldwide by replacing misconceptions with scientific facts about bears, their role in ecosystems, and their relations with humans.

Videos

[PBS: Science Trek: Bear Types](#)

This 1-minute video introduces the 8 different bear species.

[Polar Bear Live Cam](#)

A 1-hour montage of live cam feeds from Cape East-Wapusk National Park.

[Bears for Kids](#)

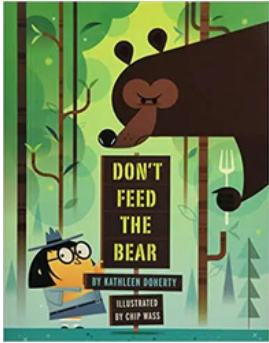
An 8-minute Learn Bright video that comes with accompanying materials.

[BBC Earth: The World of Bears - Giants of the Wild](#)

A stunning 36-minute documentary narrated by the iconic David Attenborough.



Book List

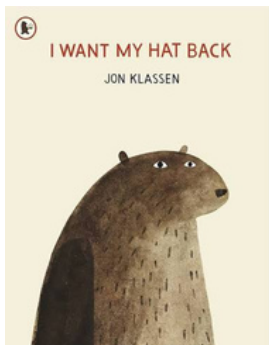


Don't Feed the Bear

by Kathleen Doherty, illustrated by Chip Wass

Bear loves the food campers leave behind, but the park ranger wants people to stop feeding him. When the ranger posts a DON'T FEED THE BEAR! sign, Bear changes it—and chaos begins! Can Bear and the ranger settle their differences and make peace?

ages 3-8

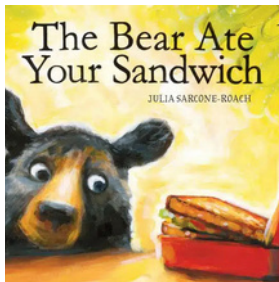


I Want My Hat Back

by Jon Klassen

A hilarious and dark picture book about a bear on a mission to find his lost hat. The ending will make you gasp!

ages 4-8



The Bear Ate Your Sandwich

by Julia Sarcone-Roach

A wonderfully illustrated and cleverly told tale of a bear who goes on an unexpected adventure to the city and happens upon an unattended sandwich in the park.

ages 3-8

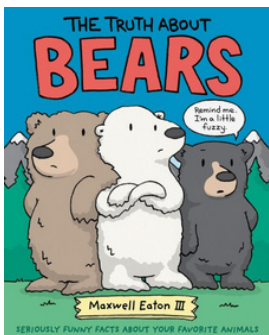


Blue Bearies

by Brenda J. Child (Red Lake Ojibwe), illustrated by Johnathan Thunder

In this bilingual (English and Ojibwemowin) story, Windy Girl and her classmates go on a field trip and learn from Mrs. Mukwa that bears are our teachers. The story weaves together Ojibwe ecology, history, and respect for animal relatives.

ages 4-9



The Truth About Bears

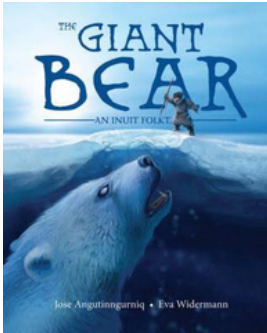
by Maxwell Eaton III

A lighthearted nonfiction picture book, filled with useful facts about bears that will make you laugh so hard you won't even realize you're learning something!

ages 5-9



Book List

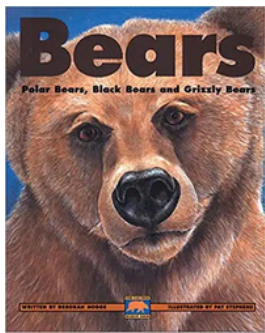


The Giant Bear: An Inuit Folktale

retold by Jose Angutinngurniq

Grounded in traditional Inuit oral history, this book explores the traditional relationship between humans, hunters, and *Nanurluk* (the giant bear of long ago) with an informative cultural foreword.

ages 5-9



Bears: Polar Bears, Black Bears, and Grizzly Bears

by Deborah Hodge, illustrated by Pat Stephens

In this fascinating book about three North American bears—grizzly bears, polar bears, and black bears— you'll find out how and where they live, what they eat, how they give birth and raise their cubs, and much more.

ages 5-10



Bears: National Geographic Kids

by Elizabeth Carney

This image-packed book explores the world of bears. You'll learn about different kinds of bears, where they live, and what they do.

ages 7-9



The Last Bear

by Hannah Gold

A moving story of an 11-year-old girl who befriends a lonely polar bear in the Arctic. April moves to a remote Arctic outpost with her scientist father and discovers a starving, stranded polar bear who isn't supposed to be there.

ages 8-12