

Do you know... how animals hear?

Not all animals use ears to hear - but that doesn't mean you can sneak up on a tarantula and he won't notice...

Find out more with our fascinating facts and trivia about animals and how they hear the world around them.

Spiders

Spiders do not have ears! But they can “hear” by sensing sounds and vibrations through highly sensitive, hair-like structures on its legs and body. In fact these ‘trichobothria’ are so sensitive that they can detect even human speech from several metres away. So, remember to be nice when you are talking about them.

Elephants

Elephants do have ears – huge ones! But their hearing power doesn't stop there. They can also detect low-frequency sounds and ground vibrations through pressure-sensitive nerve endings in their feet called ‘**Pacinian corpuscles**’. By pressing their trunks and feet to the ground, they ‘listen’ to rumbles that can travel for miles. This helps elephants communicate with each other across great distances – a kind of secret underground messaging system.

Dogs

Dogs have ears that hear brilliantly but also look cool – their large outer ears can be pointy or flappy or fluffy and are called ‘**pinnae**’.

Their hearing is so sensitive it allows them to pick up sounds from about four times farther away than humans, plus they can also hear sounds that are completely inaudible to humans - this is what makes them great rescue animals.



Dolphins

Dolphins do have ears, but you can hardly see them. They need to be streamlined for swimming, so their ears are tiny holes on the sides of their head. They use their lower jaws to pick up sound vibrations in water, which are then carried to the middle ear. Their brains process these signals with astonishing speed, allowing them to echolocate – a biological sonar system that helps them “see” with sound, even in the darkest ocean depths.

Earthworms

Worms don't have ears – but they use their whole body to ‘hear’. Their slimy skin is covered in tiny sensors called ‘**mechanoreceptors**’, that detect vibrations in the ground like digging, rain, or footsteps. This means they can wriggle deeper into the earth to get away from danger.

Beetles

Ladybirds live in a silent world! Of the 350,000 species of beetle that exist, only a few species of scarab and tiger beetles have ears that allow them to receive and respond to sound. The other hundreds of thousands of beetle species can't hear a thing, but a few can learn and communicate by receiving and causing vibrations in whatever solid object they are creeping and crawling on.

Crickets and Grasshoppers

They might look almost the same, and they do both have ears – but not on their heads. Both insects have ears called ‘tympana’, which work in the same way but are in very different places on their bodies. A grasshopper chirps his tunes during the day – and his ears are on his belly! A cricket sings his songs at night – and his ears are on his knees! Do you think if he kneels down he can't hear?



Red Foxes

Red foxes have large pointy ears, also called trumpets!

These ears can swivel in different directions like little radar dishes to catch sounds from all around.

The red fox has super sensitive hearing and can tell exactly where a sound is coming from – if they hear a mouse under the snow they do an amazing **Mouse-Pounce!** – a precise leap and dive headfirst into the snow to catch that snack.

Barn Owls

Barn owls have ears but they are well hidden under the beautiful heart heart-shaped disk of feathers surrounding its deep-set face.

Both of these unusual features act like a satellite dish, picking up and amplifying sounds that are ten times softer than what humans can hear.

And if that isn't amazing enough, one ear is positioned lower down and they listen for sounds on the ground with that one. The other is higher and listens out 'up above'.

