

All About Sloths



Sloths are the slowest mammal on Earth and live mainly in the tropical rainforests of South and Central America. They spend most of their lives climbing or hanging upside down.

What They Look Like



Sloths have short tails, round heads and hidden ears. There are two kinds of sloths, the three-toed sloth and the two-toed sloth. Interestingly, their names relate to how many claws they have on their longer arms. Extremely sharp, sloths' claws are about 10cm long and they help them to hang upside down and grab leaves for food.

On average, both types of sloths are 60cm long, weigh between 3.6 to 7.7kgs and have a pale brown, shaggy coat with green **algae** growing on it. This gives them a greenish colour that helps to hide them from predators. Their closest relatives are anteaters.

Did You Know?

The shape of a sloth's skull makes it look like they are always smiling, even when they are in pain or annoyed.



Fun Facts About Their Bodies

Overall, sloths live for about 25-35 years and eat leaves, branches and fruit. Like a cow, their stomachs have four hollow parts. This makes their **digestion** slow so they only have to climb down once every six days to go to the toilet.

The three-toed sloth can turn its head quite far over its shoulder. Generally, two-toed sloths are slightly larger than three-toed sloths.



How They Move and Their Unique Habits



On land, sloths cannot walk very well but they are excellent swimmers. Sloths can hold their breath for up to 40 minutes and move slowly.

They can cover about 38 metres a day.

Did You Know?

They are active mostly at night and sleep 15-20 hours a day.



Sloths in Danger

The continuous clearing of forests within their habitats means that sloths are endangered. In Costa Rica and Peru, there are natural sanctuaries where sloths are protected.



With their extraordinary body adaptations, sloths are thought to be one of the more bizarre creatures to be found on our planet.



Glossary

algae	A tiny non-flowering plant.
digestion	The process of breaking down food in the stomach so it can be used in the body.

Questions

1. How many metres does a sloth move in a day? Tick one.

- ☐ 38 metres
- ☐ 10 metres
- ☐ 6 metres
- ☐ 300 metres

2. Which activities are sloths very good at? Tick one.

- ☐ sleeping and walking
- ☐ climbing and swimming
- ☐ swimming and walking
- ☐ climbing and running

3. Draw **four** lines and match each animal to its description.

three-toed sloth

two-toed sloth

cow

anteater

has a similar stomach
to a sloth

slightly smaller than the
other type of sloth

has two claws on all
four limbs

the closest relative
to the sloth

4. How long can a sloth live? Tick one.

- ☐ 15-20 years
- ☐ 20-25 years
- ☐ 25-35 years
- ☐ 35-40 years

5. Look at the section **Fun Facts About Their Bodies**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'a little bit'.

6. Fill in the missing words.

The _____ can turn its _____ quite
far over its shoulder.

7. Look at the section **Fun Facts About Their Bodies**.

Would you like to be able to see over your shoulder like a sloth? Explain your answer.

Answers

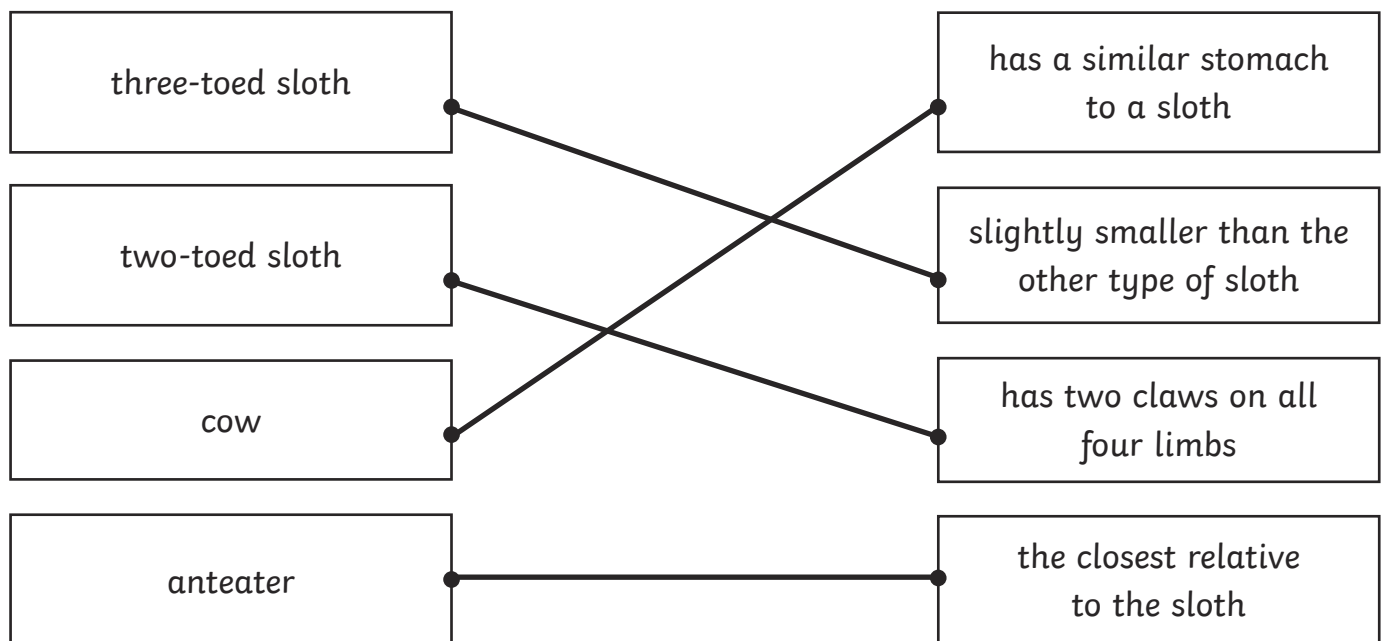
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- ☒ **38 metres**
- ☐ 10 metres
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2. Which activities are sloths very good at? Tick one.

- ☐ sleeping and walking
- ☒ **climbing and swimming**
- ☐ swimming and walking
- ☐ climbing and running

3. Draw four lines and match each animal to its description.



4. How long can a sloth live? Tick one.

- ☐ 15-20 years
- ☐ 20-25 years
- ☒ **25-35 years**
- ☐ 35-40 years

5. Look at the section **Fun Facts about Their Bodies.**

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'a little bit'.

slightly

6. Fill in the missing words.

The **three-toed sloth** can turn its **head** quite far
over its shoulder.

7. Look at the section **Fun Facts About Their Bodies.**

Would you like to be able to see over your shoulder like a sloth? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think I would like to see over my shoulder like a sloth. It would be fun to see what is behind me and if I was riding my bike, for example, it might help me to stay safe.

All About Sloths

It is well known that sloths are the slowest mammal on Earth.

These herbivores spend most of their lifetime hanging upside down, mainly in the tropical rainforests of South and Central America.

What They Look Like



There are two kinds of sloth. They are the three-toed sloth and the two-toed sloth. Interestingly, their names relate to how many claws they have on their arms. In actual fact, the two-toed sloth has two claws on its arms, not three. Roughly about 10cm long, a sloth's claws are razor-sharp which helps them to hang upside down and makes it easy for them to grab bunches of leaves for food.

Overall, sloths have short, stubby tails, round heads and hidden ears. Both types of sloth average 60cm long, weigh from 3.6 to 7.7kgs and have a pale brown, shaggy coat covered with green **algae** that grows on their fur. Luckily, this gives them an overall greenish colour that helps to hide them from predators.

Fun Facts About Their Bodies

In general, sloths live for 25-35 years and eat a diet made up of leaves, fruit, small tree branches and some insects. Similar to a cow, their stomachs have four hollow parts. These chambers make their **digestion** slow so they only have to climb down from the trees once every six days to go to the toilet.

The three-toed sloth has up to nine **vertebrae** instead of seven, allowing it to turn its head 270 degrees. On average, two-toed sloths are slightly larger than three-toed sloths.



Did You Know?

The shape of a sloth's skull makes it look like they are always smiling, even when they are in pain or annoyed.

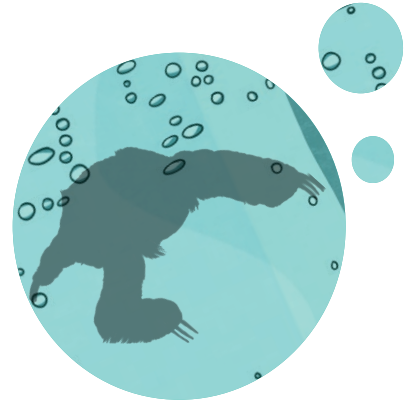


How They Move and Their Quirky Bodies

When on the ground, sloths struggle to walk.

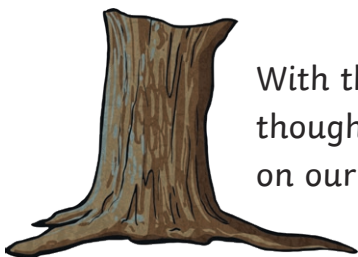
Surprisingly, they are brilliant swimmers in the water. Being nocturnal, they sleep 15-20 hours during the day.

Mostly **solitary** animals, sloths can become forceful towards other sloths if they come too close.



Sloths in Danger

As a result of the continuous clearing of forests in their habitats, sloths are endangered. Natural sanctuaries in Costa Rica and Peru offer sloths some protection.



With their extraordinary body adaptations, sloths are thought to be one of the more bizarre creatures to be found on our planet.

Glossary

algae	A tiny non-flowering plant.
digestion	The process of breaking down food in the stomach so it can be used in the body.
solitary	Prefers to live alone.
vertebrae	Small bones that form the backbone.

Questions

1. How long does a sloth sleep per day? Tick one.

- ☐ 15-20 hours
- ☐ 12-15 hours
- ☐ 8-12 hours
- ☐ 4-8 hours

2. Look at the section **What They Look Like**.

What helps hide sloths from predators? Tick one.

- ☐ red algae
- ☐ green algae
- ☐ grey fur
- ☐ green fur

3. Which two countries have created natural sanctuaries for sloths? Tick one.

- ☐ Mexico and Costa Rica
- ☐ Chile and Peru
- ☐ Costa Rica and Chile
- ☐ Costa Rica and Peru

4. Draw **four** lines and match each body part to its description.

a sloth's fur

extremely sharp and
about 10cm long

a sloth's claw

has four hollow
parts, allowing for
slow digestion

a sloth's stomach

covered with green algae

a three-toed
sloth's vertebrae

allows it to turn its head
270 degrees

5. Look at the section **Sloths in Danger**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'safe places'.

6. Fill in the missing words.

Sloths are the slowest _____ on Earth and live mainly in the

_____ of South and Central America.

7. Look at the section **Sloths in Danger**.

Describe how you think the sloths are protected in these sanctuaries.

8. Why do you think a sloth's arms are longer than its legs?

Answers

1. How long does a sloth sleep per day? Tick one.

- ☒ **15-20 hours**
- ☐ 12-15 hours
- ☐ 8-12 hours
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2. Look at the section **What They Look Like**.

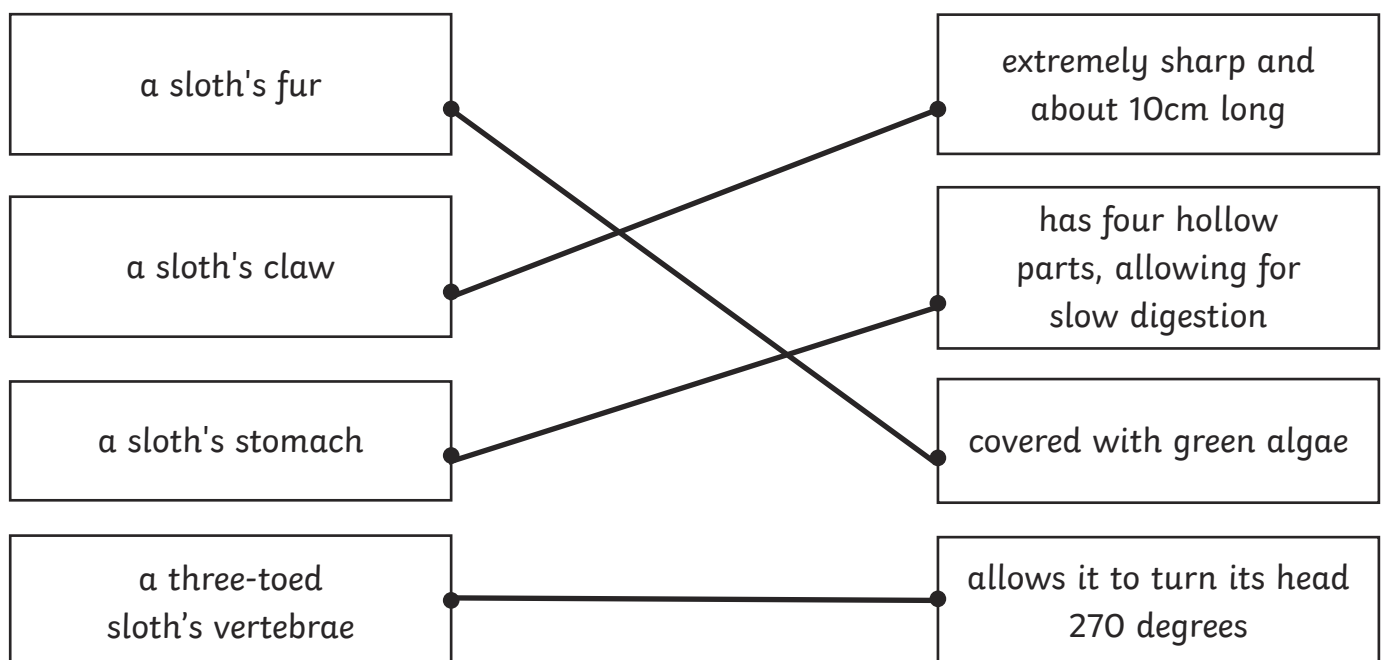
What helps hide sloths from predators? Tick one.

- ☐ red algae
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- ☐ grey fur
- ☐ green fur

3. Which two countries have created natural sanctuaries for sloths? Tick one.

- ☐ Mexico and Costa Rica
- ☐ Chile and Peru
- ☐ Costa Rica and Chile
- ☒ **Costa Rica and Peru**

4. Draw **four** lines and match each body part to its description.



5. Look at the section **Sloths in Danger**.

Find and copy one word that means the same as 'safe places'.

sanctuaries

6. Fill in the missing words.

Sloths are the slowest **mammal** on Earth and live mainly in the **tropical rainforests** of South and Central America.

7. Look at the section **Sloths in Danger**.

Describe how you think the sloths are protected in these sanctuaries.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the sanctuaries protect them by not allowing anyone to cut the trees or hunt sloths. I think there are rules about what you can do to a sloth if you see one.

8. Why do you think a sloth's arms are longer than its legs?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think a sloth's arms are longer than its legs because they climb so much and need longer arms to pull themselves around and hold their bodies up.

All About Sloths



Living mainly in the tropical rainforests of South and Central America, sloths are the slowest mammal on Earth.

These herbivores spend 85-95 per cent of their lives hanging upside down or expertly climbing the trees where they live.

What They Look Like



Generally, there are two main types of sloth: the three-toed sloth and the two-toed sloth.

Curiously, their names relate to how many claws they have on their arms, not their feet. The two-toed sloth actually has two claws on its arms. As sharp as knives, sloths' claws are about 10cm long and they help them to hang upside down and grab bunches of leaves for food.

Normally, both types of sloths average 60cm long, weigh anywhere between 3.6 to 7.7kgs and have a brown to grey, shaggy coat covered with green algae. Interestingly, the **algae** that grows on their fur gives them a greenish colour that helps to hide them from predators.

Sloths have stumpy tails, round heads and concealed ears. The shape of their skulls makes it look like they are always smiling, even when they are injured or agitated. Differing in size, their arms are slightly longer than their legs.

Fun Facts About Their Bodies

Due to their treetop lifestyle, sloths have a limited diet: leaves, fruit, small tree branches and some insects. Like a cow, their stomachs have chambers, allowing them to digest leaves over two months.

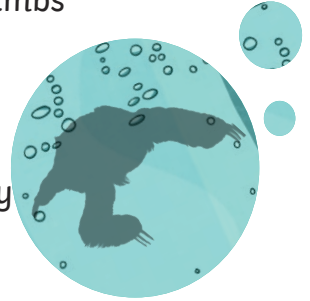
As a result of their slow **digestion**, sloths only climb down once every six days to go to the toilet. The three-toed sloth has up to nine **vertebrae**, allowing it to be able to turn its head 270 degrees. Side by side, two-toed sloths are slightly larger than three-toed sloths.



How They Move and Their Quirky Bodies

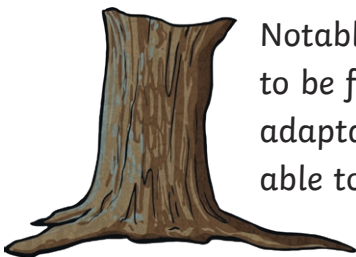
As babies, they weigh 300-500 grams and stay with their mother for the first year of their lives and they have a lifespan of 25-35 years.

Down on the rainforest floor, sloths walk with difficulty as their limbs are adapted to hanging their bodies, not holding them upright. However, they are marvellous swimmers. Impressively, sloths can hold their breath for up to 40 minutes. Moving at a slow pace of about 38 metres in a single day, sloths do not travel far. As they are nocturnal animals, they are active at night and sleep 15-20 hours during the day. Sloths prefer to live alone.



Sloths in Danger

Due to large-scale farming and the expansion of cities, forests are constantly being cleared in Central and South America. Unfortunately, this means that sloths are quickly losing their habitat. Many wildlife charities are working with governments in these areas to help protect sloths, creating natural sloth sanctuaries in Costa Rica and Peru.



Notably, sloths are thought to be one of the more peculiar creatures to be found on our planet because of their astonishing body adaptations and quirky habits. With our help, they will hopefully be able to fascinate us far into the distant future.

Did You Know?

The shape of a sloth's skull makes it look like they are always smiling, even when they are in pain or annoyed.



Glossary

algae	A tiny non-flowering plant.
digestion	The process of breaking down food in the stomach so it can be used in the body.
vertebrae	Small bones that form the backbone.

Questions

1. Draw **four** lines and match each fact to its measurement.

the weight of a baby sloth at birth	3.6 to 7.7kgs
the weight of an adult sloth	300-500g
the length of an adult sloth	10cm
the length of an adult sloth's claws	60cm

2. A three-toed sloth has how many vertebrae? Tick one.

- ☐ seven
- ☐ eight
- ☐ nine
- ☐ ten

3. Fill in the missing words.

The _____ of their _____ makes it
look like they are always smiling.

4. How much of a sloth's life is spent hanging upside down?

5. Look at the section **What They Look Like**.

Find and copy one word that is similar to 'annoyed'.

6. Compare how a three-toed sloth differs from a two-toed sloth? How are they similar?

7. Look at the section **Sloths in Danger**.

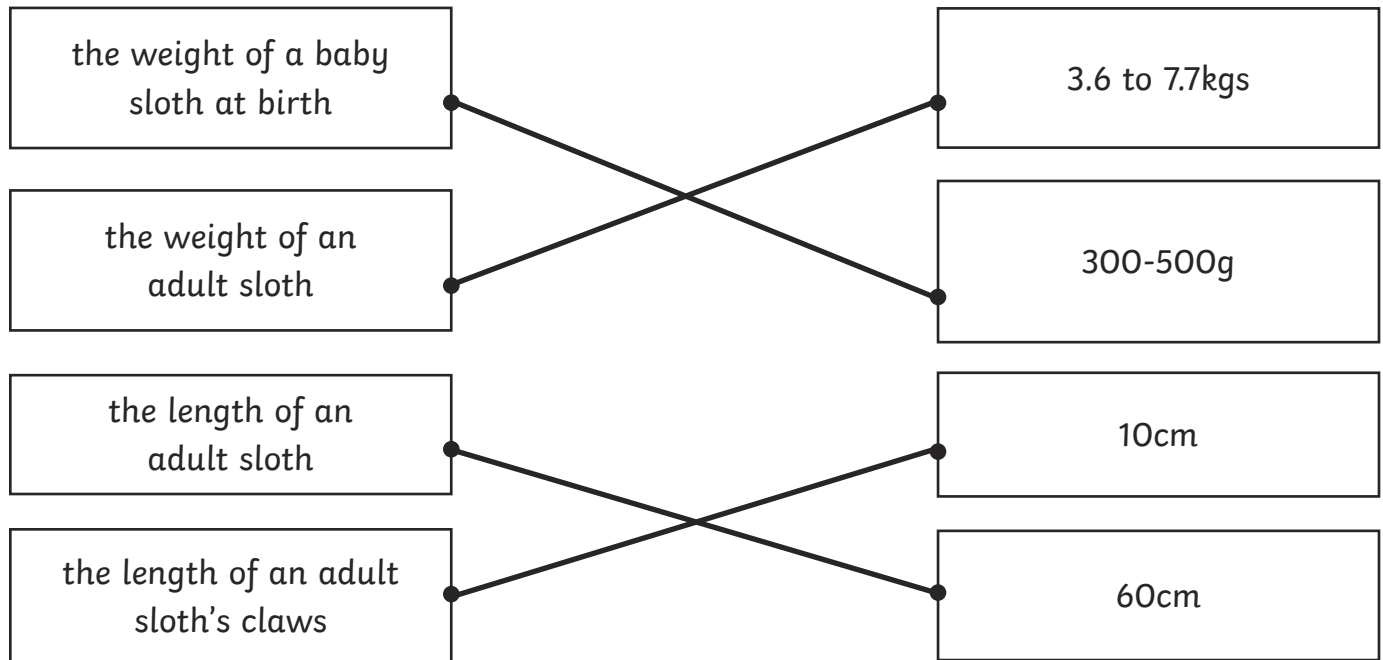
If you were asked to create a sloth sanctuary for your local zoo, what would it look like?

8. Look at the section **How They Move and Their Quirky Habits**.

Why do you think sloths have to sleep 15-20 hours a day?

Answers

1. Draw **four** lines and match each fact to its measurement.



2. A three-toed sloth has how many vertebrae? Tick one.

- ☐ seven
- ☐ eight
- ☒ **nine**
- ☐ ten

3. Fill in the missing words.

The **shape** of their **skulls** makes it look like they are always smiling.

4. How much of a sloth's life is spent hanging upside down?

85-95%

5. Look at the section **What They Look Like**.
Find and copy one word that is similar to 'annoyed'.

agitated

6. Compare how a three-toed sloth differs from a two-toed sloth? How are they similar?
Pupils' own responses, such as: A three-toed sloth has three claws on its arms instead of two, is smaller and can turn its head 270°. They both have longer arms, green algae on their fur and always look like they are smiling.
7. Look at the section **Sloths in Danger**.
If you were asked to create a sloth sanctuary for your local zoo, what would it look like?
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think it would have lots of tasty trees that sloths like to eat, a swimming hole, glass walls so it's easy to see them and plenty of places for them to sun themselves during the day.
8. Look at the section **How They Move and Their Quirky Habits**.
Why do you think sloths have to sleep 15-20 hours a day?
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think sloths have to sleep so much because it takes so long for them to digest food and the food they eat doesn't give them a lot of energy.