

- ① **Read the text, then work on the tasks on the third page. You can highlight important facts, clarify unknown vocabulary or make notes to help you!**

## The Lion - King of Beasts

Except for the tiger, the lion is the largest member of the cat family. Nicknamed the “king of beasts,” the lion is a well-muscled cat with a long body, large head, and short legs. The males are easily recognized for their mane of fur around the head and neck. The lion’s scientific name is *Panthera leo*.

- Most lions live in Africa, though a small group can be found in India.
- Female lions, called lionesses, usually do most of the hunting.
- Lions are excellent leapers and jumpers.
- Lions are the only cats that live in groups, called prides.
- A lion’s roar can be heard up to 8 kilometers away.
- An adult male lion measures 1.8–2.1 meters long. It can weigh 170–230 kilograms.
- The female is smaller, shorter, and more slender. The female weighs only about 120–180 kilograms.

Historically, lions ranged across much of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Now, however, they are found mainly in parts of Africa south of the Sahara. An isolated group of about 650 Asiatic lions lives under strict protection in India’s Gir National Park. Lions live in a variety of habitats but prefer grassland, savanna, dense scrub, and open woodland.

The lion’s coat is short. It varies in color from light yellow, orange-brown, or silvery gray to dark brown. A tuft on the tail tip is usually darker than the rest of the coat. A male lion usually has a mane, or longer hair around the neck and head. The length, color, and thickness varies between different individuals and populations. In some lions the mane and fringe are dark, almost black. However, some males lack a mane altogether. Manes make male lions look larger and may serve to intimidate rivals or impress prospective mates. The female never has a mane.

Lions are unique among cats in that they live in a group, or pride. The members of a pride typically spend the day in several scattered groups that may unite to hunt or to share a meal. A pride consists of several generations of lionesses, a smaller number of breeding males, and their cubs. The group may consist of just a couple or more than 30 members. However, about 15 is the average size.

Each pride has a well-defined territory that is strictly defended against intruding lions. There’s also a fringe area where some overlap is tolerated. Some prides have been known to use the same territory for decades, passing the area on between females. Lions proclaim their territory by roaring and by scent marking.

Lionesses living in open savanna do most of the hunting. The males typically take their meals from the female's kills. However, male lions are also adept hunters, and in some areas they hunt frequently. Males in scrub or wooded habitat spend less time with the females and hunt most of their own meals. Nomadic males must always find their own food.

Female lions usually breed with the one or two adult males of their pride. The gestation period (the time between conception and birth) is usually about 108 days. The litter size varies from one to six cubs, but two to four is usual.

The newborn cubs are helpless and blind. They have a thick coat with dark spots that usually disappear as they grow. Cubs are able to follow their mothers at about three months of age and are weaned by six or seven months. They begin participating in kills by 11 months but probably can't survive on their own until they are two years old.

Lionesses often leave their cubs alone for long hours as they hunt. With no protection, the cubs are often attacked by animals such as hyenas. As a result, there is a high death rate among the cubs. However, survival rates improve after the age of two.

Some female cubs remain within the pride as they grow older. Others are forced out and join other prides or wander as nomads. Male cubs are expelled from the pride at about three years of age and become nomads. When they are old enough (after age five) they may try to take over another pride. Many adult males remain nomads for life.

In the wild, lions seldom live more than 8–10 years. Humans hunt them, and other lions may attack them. In addition, they may be hurt and die from kicks or puncture wounds from their prey. In captivity, lions may live 25 years or more.

The genus *Panthera* includes leopards, jaguars, and tigers as well as lions. In captivity, scientists have bred lions with other big cats. These matings are unlikely to occur in the wild.

1. The offspring of a lion and a tigress (female tiger) is called a liger.
2. The offspring of a tiger and a lioness is a tigon.
3. The offspring of a leopard and a lioness is a leopon.

(source:<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/lion/275490>)

- ② **What distinguishes male lions from females?**
- The colour of their coat
  - Presence of a mane
  - Size
  - Their habitat
- ④ **How do lion cubs typically reach independence?**
- The males are abandoned by at a certain age
  - Male cubs join other prides, while female cubs remain within their birth pride
  - They become nomads immediately after weaning
  - They stay with their mothers until they are three years old
- ③ **What is a defining characteristic of lion prides?**
- They consist only of adult males and their cubs
  - Members do not defend territories
  - They typically consist of multiple generations of lionesses
  - Cubs are never left alone by lionesses
- ⑤ **Which of the following statements about lion reproduction is true?**
- Cubs are born with open eyes and a fully developed coat
  - The gestation period for lions is around 150 days
  - Female lions typically mate with one or two males in their pride
  - Lions in captivity live longer lives compared to those in the wild

⑥ **Fill in the gaps with the correct information from the text!**

Lions are the [ ] largest member of the cat family, surpassed only by the tiger. They primarily inhabit savannas of Africa, although a small population also exists in [ ]. Unlike other cats, lions live in [ ] called prides. Lion cubs are born [ ] and blind. They begin to participate in kills by [ ] months of age, but may not be fully independent until they are [ ] years old. The lifespan of lions in the [ ] is typically around 8-10 years, while those in [ ] may live considerably longer, sometimes reaching [ ] years or more.

⑦ **Compare the life expectancy of lions in the wild with that in captivity. Briefly explain why the life expectancy could differ in these two environments.**

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⑧ Explain the differences between liger, tigon and leopon.

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