

Name _____

Dolphin Dialogues: Exploring Communication in the Ocean's Smartest Creatures

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Dolphins use their signature whistles in their social interactions to maintain contact with each other, reunite after separation, and convey identity information. Each dolphin has a unique signature whistle that functions like a name or identifier, allowing them to recognize and call out to specific individuals within their social group. This form of communication is crucial for social bonding and ensuring group cohesion.
2. Dolphins use echolocation clicks to navigate their environment and locate prey. By emitting clicks through their blowholes and listening to the echoes that bounce back from objects, dolphins gather detailed information about the size, shape, and location of potential prey. Echolocation helps them effectively hunt and navigate, especially in murky waters where visibility is low.
3. Body language and behaviors play a significant role in dolphin communication. Dolphins use movements such as leaps, spins, and slaps of their flippers on the water's surface to convey information about their intentions, emotions, and social status. These physical actions complement vocalizations by providing visual signals that can be interpreted by other dolphins, enhancing the overall communication process.
4. Cooperative behaviors are essential for the success of dolphin groups, particularly in activities such as hunting and forming alliances. Effective communication, through vocalizations, body language, and coordinated movements, allows dolphins to work together efficiently. For instance, during cooperative hunting, dolphins use their communication skills to herd, trap, and catch prey more effectively than they could alone. This teamwork is facilitated by their ability to convey precise information and coordinate their actions.

