

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## The Life Cycle of a Giraffe

Giraffes are the tallest land animals in the world and have fascinating life cycles. A giraffe's life begins when a female giraffe, called a cow, gives birth to a calf after a gestation period of about 15 months. When a calf is born, it can stand and walk within a few hours, which helps it stay safe from predators in the wild.

During the first few months of life, the calf stays close to its mother for protection and milk. The calf nurses from its mother for about six to nine months but will start eating leaves from trees as early as four months old. Giraffes grow quickly and can nearly double their height within the first year. As the calf grows older, it becomes more independent and starts to explore the world around it. Giraffes are social animals and often live in groups called towers. Young giraffes will stay in these groups where they can learn from older giraffes and stay safe.

By the time a giraffe is around four years old, it reaches adulthood. At this stage, female giraffes are ready to have their own calves, while males often leave the tower to form small groups or live alone. Adult giraffes can live up to 25 years in the wild and even longer in zoos where they are protected from predators and have plenty of food.

Throughout their lives, giraffes play an important role in their ecosystem. They help shape the landscape by eating leaves from tall trees, which allows sunlight to reach plants below. Giraffes' life cycle is essential for maintaining a healthy balance in their habitats.