

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## How Leopards Reproduce

Leopards have fascinating behaviors when it comes to reproduction. These big cats are solitary animals and usually come together only during the mating season. Male leopards will seek out females when they are ready to mate. They use scent markings and vocalizations to find each other.

Once a male and female meet, they may stay together for a few days. During this time, they mate multiple times to increase the chances of pregnancy. After mating, the male leaves, and the female takes on the responsibility of raising the cubs alone.

The gestation period, or the time a female leopard is pregnant, lasts about 90 to 105 days. When the time comes, the mother gives birth to a litter of one to three cubs, though occasionally there can be as many as four. Cubs are born blind and helpless, relying completely on their mother for care and protection. For the first few weeks, the mother keeps the cubs hidden in a safe den, such as a cave or thick brush. She moves them occasionally to keep them safe from predators. Cubs begin to open their eyes after about 10 days and start exploring the area near the den by the age of six weeks.

The mother teaches her cubs how to hunt by bringing back small prey and encouraging them to practice hunting skills. Cubs stay with their mother for about two years, learning important survival skills before becoming independent.

Leopards have strong maternal instincts and are very protective of their young. The cubs face many dangers in the wild, but the care provided by their mother gives them the best chance for survival.