

Cheetahs

- Cheetahs are known for being the world's fastest land animal! They can achieve 70mph (*110 km/hr*) for just under a minute. Their stride is 7 meters long. They can go from 0 to 60 in 3 seconds.
- Cheetahs live an average of 10-12 years in the wild. Though males' average life span is closer to 8 years. (*17-20 years in captivity.*)
- Adult cheetahs weigh from 75 to 125 pounds. They stand 28 to 36 inches tall at their shoulder. Males are slightly larger with bigger heads.
- Cheetahs measure 40 to 60 inches in length from head to hind quarters. The tail is 24 to 32 inches.
- The cheetah's undercoat ranges in color from light tan to a deep gold and is marked by solid black spots.
- Their most distinctive feature is the **teardrop stripes** that run from the eyes to the mouth. The stripes are thought to protect their eyes from the sun's glare and act like a rifle scope – focusing on prey at long distances.
- Their tails end with a bushy tuft encircled by 5 or 6 dark rings. The tail is very functional. It acts like a rudder when zooming across the savannah and assists young cubs in following their mothers in tall grass.
- What makes them so fast?
 - Their large nostrils, big heart, expansive lungs, and strong arteries and adrenals allow for increased oxygen intake and efficient circulation.
 - Thin frame, long legs and slender/light weight body lessen resistance.
 - The tail works like a rudder giving stabilization and counterbalance.
 - Specialized muscles allow for a greater swing to the limbs increasing acceleration.
 - A flexible spine.
 - Semi-retractable claws work like cleats.
 - Foot pads that are hard and less round function like tire treads giving increased traction.
 - The shoulder blades do not attach to the collar bone, thus allowing the shoulders to move freely.
 - The hip and shoulder extension allow for a large range of extension during running. Hence, the long stride.
- At 4 strides per second and then being air bound 2 times per stride: That's 8 times they are completely off the ground per second! (*4 times all 4 legs are completely extended and then 4 times 4 legs are bunched up under body.*)
- Female cheetahs typically give birth to a litter of 3 cubs, but can range from 2 to 5 cubs.
- At birth cheetahs weigh 8½ to 15 ounces. They're blind and helpless. After a day or so, mom must leave to find food. During this time, cubs are extremely vulnerable.
- A mother cheetah cares for her cubs all on her own for about 1½ years. No help from dad.
- Cheetah cubs are very active and playful. They can play on trees since claws are sharper when young.
- They learn to hunt, their most critical survival skill, by following their mother on hunts.
- When female siblings become mature, they split from their family to lead an independent life.
- Cheetahs do not roar. They growl, chirp, hiss, snarl and bark. **And they purr!!**

- Male siblings remain together for the rest of their lives, forming a group known as a coalition. This coalition increases hunting success and helps defend against predators.
- Cheetah populations are struggling because of genetic similarities. Without enough land and habitats to spread across, the diversity that is needed cannot occur. Instead, inbreeding increases and so do physical impairments and death rates.
- They have exceptionally keen eyesight.
- Cheetahs are visual hunters. They tend to be diurnal – hunting in early morning and late afternoon. They do not hunt at night though there are exceptions like hunting by moonlight.
- They stalk, chase, trip their prey, and then give a suffocating bite to the throat.
- They are one of the most successful hunters. However, their kills are frequently stolen.
- Prey includes: gazelles (especially Thomson’s gazelles), impalas, small antelopes, hares, birds and rodents. They also prey on small calves of larger herd animals.
- Predators play an important role in any ecosystem. They keep prey species healthy by killing the weak and old individuals. They also act as a population check which helps plant-life by preventing over grazing.
- Cheetahs spend most of their time sleeping and they are minimally active during the hottest portions of the day. They enjoy shady spots like under trees.
- The largest number of cheetahs live in Namibia.
- Cheetahs require large expanses of land. As people take more and more land, cheetahs’ habitats are destroyed. Read more at the bottom of <https://cheetah.org/learn/about-cheetahs/>
- Find more cheetah pictures and info about the other animals at: www.theater4church.com/Animals.htm



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