

The African Lion



For all of their roaring, growling, and ferociousness, lions are family animals and truly social in their own communities. They usually live in groups of 15 or more animals called prides. Prides can be as small as 3 or as big as 40 animals.

In a pride, lions hunt prey, raise cubs, and defend their territory together.

In prides the females do most of the hunting and cub rearing. Usually all the lionesses in the pride are related—mothers, daughters, grandmothers, and sisters.

Many of the females in the pride give birth at about the same time. A cub may nurse other females as well as its mother.

Each pride generally will have no more than two adult males. While the females usually live with the pride for life, the males often stay for only two to four years. After that they go off on their own or are evicted by other males who take over the pride.

When a new male becomes part of the pride it is not unusual for him to kill all the cubs, insuring that all future cubs will have his genes.

The main job of males in the pride is defending the pride's territory. A male's loud roar, usually heard after sunset, can carry for as far as five miles (eight kilometers). The roar warns off intruders and helps round up stray members of the pride.

Hunting generally is done in the dark by the lionesses. They often hunt in groups of two or three, using teamwork to stalk, surround, and kill their prey.

Lionesses aren't the most successful of hunters, because they usually score only one kill out of

several tries. After the kill the males usually eat first, lionesses next—and the cubs get what's left.

Males and females fiercely defend against any outside lions that attempt to join their pride. Maybe in this case the family that preys together stays together!



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 18 horizontal rows. Each row is defined by a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line.



FUN FACTS

Lions once roamed in Africa, southern Europe, and parts of Asia. Today their primary habitats are in Africa, with a few still living in the Gir Forest of India.

A fully grown adult male lion can weigh between 330 and 550 pounds (150 and 250 kilograms).

Lions live in grasslands and plains. Their tawny-colored coats act as camouflage. They are not jungle dwellers.

When males are forced to leave the pride that they were born into, they form small bachelor groups and roam.

Lions drink with their tongues and can usually lap a little water at a time. It takes about ten minutes to “fill 'er up.”

One way researchers identify individual lions is by recording the spots on their muzzles.

Lions are carnivores—meat eaters. They hunt animals ranging in size from small hares to large buffalo.

Lions have been known to live nearly 30 years in captivity and have an average life span of 15 years in the wild.

Lions can run at a top speed of 36 miles (58 kilometers) an hour, but not for long.

After they feed, lions may not hunt for a few days. But when they eat, they usually eat all of their prey at once.

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