

Pre-Reading

Match the words in **bold** with their definitions.

1	Tom was imprisoned for stealing a car.	A	someone who catches and/or kills animals illegally
2	The owners of the animal shelter were accused of mistreating the animals.	B	to treat an animal or person in a cruel, unfair or unkind way
3	Many zoos breed animals in order to increase the population.	C	organised or controlled
4	Poachers hunt and kill rhinos for their horns.	D	an area surrounded by a fence used to keep animals to be killed for entertainment
5	Animals are killed for sport on hunting ranches .	E	to keep animals in order to produce young animals in a controlled way
6	The positives definitely outweigh the negatives.	F	to be put in prison
7	The zoo is managed by a group of directors.	G	to be greater or more important than

Are Zoos a Good Thing?

Zoos are hugely popular attractions for adults and children. But are they actually a good thing?

Critics of zoos argue that animals often suffer physically and mentally by being imprisoned. Even the best artificial environments can't match the space, diversity, and freedom that animals have in their natural habitats. This deprivation causes many zoo animals to become stressed or mentally ill. Capturing animals in the wild also causes much suffering by splitting up families. Some zoos make animals behave unnaturally: for example, marine parks often force dolphins and whales to perform tricks. These mammals may die decades earlier than their wild relatives, and some even try to commit suicide.

On the other hand, by bringing people and animals together, zoos can educate the public about conservation issues and inspire people to protect animals and their habitats. Some zoos provide a safe environment for animals which have been mistreated in circuses, or pets which have been abandoned. Zoos also carry out important research into subjects like animal behaviour and how to treat illnesses.

One of the most important modern functions of zoos is supporting international breeding programmes, particularly for endangered species. In the wild, some of the rarest species have difficulty in finding mates and breeding, and they might also be threatened by poachers, loss of their habitat and predators. A good zoo will help these species to live and breed in a secure environment.

However, opponents of zoos say that most captive breeding programmes do not release animals back into the wild. Extra animals are sold to other zoos or to circuses or hunting ranches in the US or South Africa, where some people will pay a lot of money for the chance to kill an animal. Often, these animals are familiar with humans and have very little chance of escaping.

So, are zoos good for animals or not? Perhaps it all depends on how well individual zoos are managed. The benefits of zoos can surely outweigh their harmful effects. However, it is understandable that many people believe imprisoning animals for any reason is simply wrong.

A. Check Your Understanding: True or False? Write *True* or *False* for these sentences.

1. Modern zoos can offer animals a living environment that is as good as their natural habitats.
2. One of the reasons zoo animals become distressed is because they are separated from their families.
3. Dolphins and whales usually live longer in zoos than in the wild.
4. People who have visited zoos are more likely to support animal conservation and protection.
5. Zoos protect animals from being used for scientific research.
6. In their natural habitats, animals suffer problems related to human activity.
7. If zoos have more animals than they can look after, they always give them to another zoo or release them back into the wild.
8. The author thinks that, on balance, zoos are generally a good thing.

B. Check Your Vocabulary: Gap Fill: Complete the gaps with a word from the box.

habitat	suicide	tricks	illnesses
mate	wild	environment	species

1. Even the best artificial environments cannot come close to an animal's natural _____.
2. Whales and dolphins in zoos are often made to perform _____.
3. Distressed and depressed zoo animals sometimes try to commit _____.
4. Zoos can provide a safe _____ for animals that have been mistreated or abandoned.
5. Zoos carry out important research into how to treat _____.
6. International breeding programmes are particularly important for endangered _____.
7. In the wild, some of the rarest species have difficulty finding a _____.
8. One criticism of breeding programmes is that they do not always release animals back into the _____.