

# WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

## Five animals that are smarter than some of us

We humans tend to think that we're the most intelligent animals on Earth, just because we rule the food chain. However, these five animals are definitely smarter than some of us.



Foto de [Niklas Hamann](#) en [Unsplash](#)

### 1. Beavers never need to call the plumber.

Beavers are master builders. In fact, a beaver is a city planner, architect and hydro-engineer all rolled up into one dog-sized, semiaquatic **rodent**. This documentary closely observes a colony of beavers as they build a **dam**, a winter-proof underwater 'fridge', and a three-room home complete with concealed entrances and a sort of chimney. What helps them detect leaks and carry out repairs so effectively is their sensitivity to the sound of **trickling** water.

### 2. Ants don't get into **traffic jams**.

Traffic scientists study ants because they're so much better than we are at handling traffic. What's their secret?

In heavy traffic, ants speed up rather than slow down, and if one ant is moving too slowly the others simply pass it, typically on the right. They travel in multiple **lanes**, and only change direction in a cooperative manner that doesn't interrupt the flow of traffic.

### 3. Dolphins never forget a name.

As a **calf**, a dolphin gives itself a name in the form of a distinctive **whistle**. Dolphins greet each other by exchanging their whistles and have been observed to remember them for decades. Studies indicate that dolphins may have complex language, and probably use **sonar** to communicate as well as their voices and bodies.

### 4. Dogs **can** kind of **tell** when you're lying to them.

Dogs are careful observers of our body language, gathering data on us in order to form abstract mental representations of our emotional states. Dogs **can tell** when their trainer speaks words (like praise) that do not match tone of voice (like disappointment). To put it another way: dogs know when you're lying.

### 5. Honey bees work together democratically for the common good.

Every year when a **hive** becomes overcrowded, the colony splits into two groups. One stays behind in the old hive, and the other must leave to establish a new community. This whole process – which involves **scouting** new potential locations, comparing their merits and making a decision – is carried out democratically.

So honey bees communicate and work together to maintain a peaceful society that reflects the will of the majority.

Sounds nice, doesn't it?



Adapted from [this article](#)  
by ECP coach

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## Word list

- rodent:** a small mammal with large, sharp front teeth, such as a mouse or rat
- dam:** a barrier constructed to contain water and raise its level
- trickling:** flowing slowly
- traffic jam:** a line of cars that have stopped or are moving very slowly
- lane:** a division of a road
- calf:** a young large mammal such as a cow, elephant, whale or dolphin
- whistle:** a clear, high-pitched sound
- to (be able to) tell:** to discern, detect or see
- hive:** the place where bees live
- to scout sth:** to search for sth in different places

## Let's chat about that!

1. What makes these five animals so intelligent?
2. Can you think of any other animals that are particularly smart?
3. What's your favourite animal? Why?
4. What animal do you think is the most intelligent of them all?
5. If you could be any animal in the world, which would you be and why?
6. Do you enjoy watching wildlife documentaries?
7. How do scientists learn about the intelligence of animals?

## Vocabulary: using hedges

In English, we use 'hedges' to soften what we say or write. Hedges are an important part of polite conversation. They make what we say less direct. This can make communication more effective, since it helps the listener feel receptive to what we're saying.

Examples:

Could you pass me the wine?

>> I **wonder** if you could pass me the wine?

I need to borrow your pen for a second.

>> I **just** need to borrow your pen for a second.

He should let them decide.

>> We **feel** he should let them decide.

You can find that information online.

>> I **reckon** you can find that information online.

She's an expert in this field.

>> She's **sort of** an expert in this field.

It was strange to see him again.

>> It was **kind of** strange to see him again.

How can you make these sentences less direct using hedging?

1. *Could you help me?*
2. *I'm going to the toilet.*
3. *It's the manager's fault.*
4. *That's unrealistic.*
5. *I'm angry with her.*
6. *Your email offended me.*