

Clues to Help You Draw a Gray Whale!

About 30 to 50 feet (9 to 15 meters) long, gray whales have streamlined bodies with narrow, tapered heads that arch downward from a pair of blowholes. The body tapers at both ends.

The whole skull of the gray whale is disproportionately large. It takes up about a fifth of the total body length.

The upper jaw slightly overlaps the lower jaw. The curve of the mouth is long. From the side view, it appears to curve downward as if in a grimace, ending just under the eye.

The eyes are located about 6 to 7 feet (2 meters) behind the tip of the snout, or roughly one-sixth of the distance from the front to the end of the whale.

Two blowholes, each about 8 inches (20 centimeters) long, are on top of the head. The blowholes are about the same distance back from the tip of the nose as the eyes.

A gray whale has no dorsal (top) fin. A prominent dorsal hump rises about two-thirds of the way back on the body. The dorsal hump is followed by 6 to 12 bumps (knuckles) along the dorsal ridge that extend to the fluke, or tail.

Two large flippers (pectoral fins) are located behind and below the eyes. Each pectoral fin is four to five feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) long. The flippers are paddle shaped and pointed at the tips.

The gray whale's fluke (tail) is horizontal. It is about 12 feet (3.6 m) across, which is roughly equal to about one-fourth of the whale's entire length. The fluke is pointed at the tips, and deeply notched in the center. It looks rather like a flattened, pointy valentine.

Two to 5 shallow grooves furrow the ventral side (underside) of the throat. The grooves are 5 feet (1.5 m) in length.

Gray whales are slate gray, but heavily mottled with white. The white is due to natural pigmentation, barnacles, and barnacle scars. Each whale has such a unique skin pigmentation pattern that individual whales can be identified by these patterns!