

ENGLISH

112/2025

MATTERS



**ANIMAL
VOCA-
BULARY**

DODATEK

ENGLISH MATTERS

Humans and animals have coexisted for millennia and our complicated relationship won't go away anytime soon. From mammoth hunts and the domestication of cattle, to taking your dog to a pet groomer – there's plenty to talk about when it comes to animals. But to have these conversations, you need vocabulary. Dive into the lexicon of the animal kingdom with *English Matters*.

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Taxonomic Terms

Animals come in all forms, shapes, and sizes. Thankfully, we can sort them, courtesy of taxonomy – the study of naming, defining, and classifying living beings. Every single animal species on Earth (aside from those we haven't discovered, yet) has been assigned a number of taxonomic ranks. It makes them easily identifiable in the scientific sense. Let's take a closer look at some important taxonomy-related words and neatly organise animals into six basic groups.

to come in | występować

aside from X | oprócz X

<p><u>Amphibians</u></p>	<p>Amphibians are <u>capable of</u> living in both <u>aquatic</u> and <u>terrestrial</u> habitats, meaning they can survive in water as well as on land. They reproduce by laying eggs in water. An example of an amphibian is the frog.</p> <p>amphibian płaz capable of sth zdolny do czegoś aquatic wodny terrestrial lądowy</p>
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<p>Birds</p>	<p><u>Vertebrates</u> characterised by <u>feathers</u>, <u>beaks</u>, and <u>lightweight</u> skeletons. Most of them fly, but some, like penguins and <u>ostriches</u>, are <u>flightless</u>. They reproduce by laying eggs, usually in nests.</p> <p>vertebrate kręgowiec feather pióro beak dziób lightweight lekki ostrich struś flightless nielatający</p>
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Fish	<p><u>Limless</u> aquatic animals <u>incapable of</u> surviving in terrestrial habitats. The fish <u>equivalent</u> of the human lungs are <u>gills</u>. Most fish reproduce by laying large numbers of small eggs underwater.</p> <p>limless pozbawiony kończyn incapable of sth niezdolny do czegoś equivalent odpowiednik gills skrzela</p>
<u>Invertebrates</u>	<p>Invertebrates are animals that <u>lack</u> a vertebral column. In simpler terms – they don't have a <u>spine</u>. Some of the largest <u>subspecies</u> of invertebrates are insects, <u>arachnids</u>, snails and <u>crustaceans</u> (e.g. <u>lobsters</u>, <u>shrimp</u> and <u>crayfish</u>).</p> <p>invertebrate bezkręgowiec to lack sth nie mieć czegoś spine kręgosłup subspecies podgatunek arachnid pajęczak crustacean skorupiak lobster homar shrimp krewetka crayfish rak</p>
<u>Mammals</u>	<p>Mammals are species that are <u>fed by</u> their mothers' milk when they're young. Dogs, cats, rabbits, bears, tigers, kangaroos, and even humans, are all mammals. Most mammals don't go through an egg incubation process, and are <u>instead</u> born alive. One of the few exceptions is the <u>platypus</u>.</p> <p>mammal ssak fed by sb karmiony przez kogoś instead w zamian platypus dziobak</p>

<p><u>Reptiles</u></p>	<p>A class of animals recognised by their dry, <u>scaly</u> skin. They typically reproduce by laying <u>soft-shelled</u> eggs on land, <u>although</u> some reptiles – such as crocodiles – have adapted to living in water.</p> <p>reptile gad scaly łuskowaty soft-shelled o miękkiej skorupie although chociaż</p>
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■ TASK

Put the animals in the correct groups.

alligator, dog, salamander, bass, wolf, spider, pigeon, toad,
sparrow, shark, fly, turtle

Amphibians:

Birds:

Fish:

Invertebrates:

Mammals:

Reptiles:

Answer Key:
Amphibians: salamander, toad | Birds: pigeon, sparrow | Fish: bass, shark
Invertebrates: spider, fly | Mammals: dog, wolf | Reptiles: alligator, turtle

Analysing the Anatomy

The anatomy of animals is different from human anatomy. Although we share some common features, like eyes, noses and ears, most animals don't have palms, hair, or nails. They do, however, have their own equivalents of these body parts. Let's see what they are.

<u>Antennae</u>	<p>A pair of <u>moveable</u> organs, usually found on the front of the head, used by animals to <u>recognise</u> and navigate the environment. Many insects, such as ants, bees and <u>beetles</u> have distinct antennae.</p> <p>antennae czułki movable ruchomy to recognise sth rozpoznać coś beetle żuk</p>
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<u>Antler</u>	<p>A <u>branched</u> horn growing on a <u>deer</u>'s head.</p> <p>antler poroże branched rozgałęziony deer jeleni</p>
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<u>Beak</u>	<p>The hard, <u>pointy</u>, and usually sharp part of a bird's mouth. Beaks have plenty of uses, with some of the most common being <u>carrying</u> things, catching worms, fighting and <u>feeding</u> young.</p> <p>beak dziób pointy spiczasty to carve sth rzeźbić, żłobić coś to feed sb karmić kogoś</p>
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<p><u>Claw</u></p>	<p>The animal equivalent of a human's nail. <u>Unlike</u> nails, claws are usually sharp and very hard. Many birds, mammals and reptiles use claws to catch <u>prey</u>, <u>dig</u> and climb.</p> <p>claw pazur unlike X inaczej niż X, w przeciwieństwie do X prey zdobycz, żer, ofiara to dig kopać</p>
<p>Feathers</p>	<p>The <u>outer covering</u> found on the bodies of birds. <u>Aside from</u> making birds <u>look fabulous</u>, feathers help birds with flying and protect them from the environment.</p> <p>outer zewnętrzny, <i>tu</i>: okrywa aside from X oprócz X to look fabulous wyglądać bajecznie</p>
<p>Front and <u>hind</u> legs</p>	<p>The legs of four-legged animals can be categorised <u>depending on</u> their position on the body. The most common <u>distinction</u> is front and hind legs. In many species, front and hind legs have their own, distinct anatomical features.</p> <p>hind tylny depending on sth w zależności od czegoś distinction rozróżnienie, różnica</p>

<u>Fur</u>	<p>The hair that <u>covers</u> the bodies of some <u>species</u> of animals.</p> <p>fur futro to cover pokrywać species gatunek, gatunki</p>
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<u>Hoof</u>	<p>The hard part of the feet found on some mammals, such as horses, cows, and deer. It's a common practice to attach <u>horseshoes</u> to <u>prevent</u> horse hooves <u>from wearing down</u>.</p> <p>hoof kopyto horseshoe podkowa to prevent sth from sth zapobiegać czemuś, chronić coś przed czymś to wear down ścierać się</p>
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<u>Muzzle</u>	<p>The mouth and nose of an animal, usually used when talking about dogs. The shape of a dog's muzzle plays an important part in the division of <u>canine skulls</u> into one of the three categories: <u>dolichocephalic</u> (long and slim muzzle), <u>brachycephalic</u> (short muzzle, flat face) and <u>mesocephalic</u> (medium-sized skull and muzzle).</p> <p>muzzle pysk division podział canine psi skull czaszka dolichocephalic dolichocefaliczny, długogłowy, długoczaszkowy brachycephalic krótkogłowy, krótkoczaszkowy, brachycefaliczny mesocephalic mezofaliczny, średniogłowy</p>
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<u>Paw</u>	<p>A type of animal foot that has claws and soft <u>pads</u>. The pads <u>allow</u> animals that have them (e.g. cats and dogs) <u>to</u> move silently, but they also protect their <u>limbs</u> by absorbing the <u>impact</u> when landing after a jump.</p> <p>paw łapa pad poduszka to allow to do sth pozwalać na z/robienie czegoś limb kończyna impact wpływ</p>
<u>Snout</u>	<p>The <u>protruding</u> part of an animal's face, similar to a dog's muzzle. Snouts come in many different shapes and sizes – think of a pig's snout and compare it with an <u>anteater</u>'s snout.</p> <p>snout pysk, ryjek protruding wystający, sterczący anteater mrówkojad</p>
<u>Suckers</u>	<p>A part of an animal's body that allows it to <u>stick to</u> a surface. Found on the bodies of <u>octopuses</u>, <u>tape-worms</u>, and even certain species of bats.</p> <p>suckers przyssawki to stick to sth przykleić się do czegoś octopus ośmiornica tapeworm tasiemiec</p>
<u>Scale</u>	<p>A small plate growing out of some animals' skins. The most common type of scale is a fish scale, but many other animals (e.g. some snakes and insects) also develop scales during their lifetime.</p> <p>scale łuska</p>

<u>Tail</u>	<p>The <u>hindmost</u> part of an animal's body; an <u>extension</u> of the <u>backbone</u> found in some vertebrates, such as cats and dogs.</p> <p>tail ogon hindmost położony najbardziej z tyłu extension poszerzenie backbone kręgosłup</p>
<u>Tentacles</u>	<p>Long, <u>flexible</u>, thin, arm-like limbs found on some aquatic animals, such as the octopus. Octopuses use tentacles to catch food, feed themselves and move.</p> <p>tentacles macki flexible elastyczny</p>
<u>Wing</u>	<p>A part of an animal's body that allows it to fly. Most commonly found on birds and insects, although the anatomy of a bird's and an insect's wing can be quite different.</p> <p>wing skrzydło</p>
<u>Whiskers</u>	<p>The long <u>bristles</u> growing from an animal's snout or muzzle. Their role is similar to that of the antennae – they help animals navigate and alert them to potential danger.</p> <p>whiskers wibrysy bristles włosie, szczecina</p>

Animal Adjectives

We've gone through numerous nouns, and now it's time to spice up the lexicon with some ear-catching adjectives.

avian – relating to birds

Ornithologists study avian behaviour.

canine – relating to dogs

My canine friend got vaccinated.

Fun Fact: In the USA, police dogs are commonly called K9 units, because it's a homophone of the word *canine*.

feline – relating to cats

Your dog has such a feline tail.

reptilian – relating to reptiles

Ancient reptilian bones were found on the beach.

The four adjectives above are quite popular. Although there are many more adjectives used to refer to all kinds of animals (such as: octopus – octopine, sheep – ovine, bear – ursine, etc.), they aren't that commonly used in everyday speech. If you don't know the precise word for, e.g., *belonging or related to the bear family*, you can easily create a fitting adjective by adding a *-like* after the name of the animal. Take a look at the sentence:

The animal had a *bearlike* (=ursine) head and *sheeplike* (=ovine) fur.

ancient | prawniany

ovine | owczy

ursine | niedźwiedzi

Vertebral Verbs

Our four-legged friends attend to some very serious business at times. Chasing yarn, trying to catch a laser, or begging for a snack are no jokes. Familiarise yourself with these verbs to speak about your pet's shenanigans with ease.

to bark – szczekać	(of a dog) to make a short, loud cry <i>Your dog was barking at the postman!</i>
to bite – gryźć	to use the teeth to cut through something <i>I was bitten by a snake.</i>
to buck – wierzgać	(of a horse) to suddenly jump or kick its hind legs <i>Whose horse is it, bucking out there by the stables?</i>
to burrow – wykopać norę; ukryć się w norze	to dig a hole or to hide in a hole <i>The fox burrowed into the hole the moment I stepped on a twig.</i>
to dig – kopać	to break up or loosen dirt and move it <i>The chicken dug into the ground with its claws.</i>
to feed – karmić	to give food, (of young animals) to receive food <i>The baby deer was feeding on its mother's milk.</i>

to growl – warczeć	(of large animals) to make a loud, low-pitched sound <i>Sometimes, I can hear a bear growling in the woods.</i>
to meow – miauczeć	(of cats) to make a high-pitched sound <i>Don't you meow at me, cat!</i>
to peck – dziobać	(of birds) to move the beak repeatedly in order to eat food off the ground <i>Two geese are pecking for corn.</i>
to perch – siadać na grzędzie	(of birds) to land and rest on something <i>I can't believe my luck! Two shoebills have just perched on my balcony!</i>
to prance – dumnie kroczyć, paradować	(of horses) to walk in an exaggerated or playful manner <i>It's so funny how these horses are prancing in the field.</i>
to prowl – skradać się	(of predators) to move stealthily in order to capture prey <i>Can you see the panther? Don't make a sound – it's prowling.</i>

<p>to rear (up) – stawać dęba</p>	<p>to stand up on one's hind legs</p> <p><i>The dog reared up, because it saw me eating a sandwich.</i></p>
<p>to stalk – śledzić, tropić</p>	<p>to follow prey in a stealthy manner</p> <p><i>Trust me – you wouldn't notice a mountain lion stalking you.</i></p>
<p>to sting – ukłuć</p>	<p>to pierce the skin with a sting in order to inject poison</p> <p><i>She got stung by a bee last summer.</i></p>
<p>to slither – pełzać</p>	<p>(of snakes) to move smoothly on the ground</p> <p><i>Snakes slither in the grass.</i></p>
<p>to whine – skomleć</p>	<p>to make a long, sad sound</p> <p><i>My dog whines when it's left alone.</i></p>

■ **TASK**

Fill in the gaps with the correct verbs. Remember to use the correct tense.

bite, whine, stalk, growl, slither

1. My dog was _____ by the door, so I took it for a walk.
2. What's that _____ in the woods? Could it be a bear?
3. A pitbull ____ me two days ago.
4. The poisonous snake _____ away and disappeared in tall grass.
5. Shhh! You see that puma? It's _____ its prey.

Answer Key: 1. whining; 2. growling; 3. bit; 4. slithered; 5. stalking

Imaginative Idioms

Understanding idioms and sayings is necessary to become a fluent English speaker. Thankfully, we can stay on topic with these animal-related expressions.

a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush (**lepszego wróbel w garści niż gołąb na dachu**) – it's better to accept what you have, than to focus on something that you could have

I didn't get a raise, but I got a bonus. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

all bark and no bite (pies, który dużo szczeka, nie gryzie) – talking a lot, but unwilling to take action

She's always talking about new business ideas, but I've never seen her put them to the test. She's all bark and no bite.

a wild goose chase (szukanie wiatru w polu) – something that requires a lot of effort, but is ultimately pointless

Trying to find this man now is a wild goose chase. He's out of the country.

the elephant in the room (oczywisty problem, o którym się nie mówi, niewygodny temat) – a major problem that people avoid talking about

It's time to address the elephant in the room. Let's talk about James's departure.

to let the cat out of the bag (zdradzić komuś tajemnicę, wygadać się) – to reveal a secret, usually accidentally or carelessly

He found out about the surprise party two days before we threw it. Somebody let the cat out of the bag.

to let somebody off the hook (wybawić kogoś z opresji, umożliwić komuś wymignięcie się od czegoś) – to allow somebody to avoid a difficult situation or facing consequences

There were no witnesses, so the police let Frank off the hook.

to rain cats and dogs (lać jak z cebra) – to rain heavily

I'm not going cycling. It's raining cats and dogs.

Pet Equipment

A responsible pet owner satisfies the needs of their furry companions. Let's go through a list of items every self-respecting pet lover should know about.

Aquarium – akwarium	A tank of water, usually made of glass, in which fish are kept. Also called a fish tank.
Cage – klatka	A metal structure designed to keep animals in. Common collocation: bird cage
Collar – obroża	A strap worn around an animal's neck. Common collocations: dog collar, cat collar
Cat door/flap – wahadłowe drzwiczki dla kota	A cutout made in the backdoor of the house that allows cats to come in and out without needing to open the door.
Chew bone – zabawka do żucia	A bone-shaped dog toy made of rawhide, rubber, or edible materials.
Harness – szelki	A more advanced version of a dog collar. Made of straps that surround a dog's torso.
Human-grade food – jedzenie dopuszczone do spożycia przez człowieka	Animal food consisting only of ingredients that are edible for humans.
Kennel – buda	A small shelter for a dog.

Lead, leash – smycz	<p>A cord attached to a collar or a harness, used to control animals during walks.</p> <p>Common collocation: <u>retractable lead</u></p> <p>retractable lead – smycz automatyczna</p>
Litter box – kuweta	<p>An indoor tray for animals to relieve themselves in. Mainly for cats, but can be used by other pets. Usually comes with a litter scoop.</p>
Poop bag – worek na odchody	<p>A miniature trash bag used to pick up dog pooh during a walk.</p>
Treat – przysmak	<p>A piece of pet food, commonly used to reward a pet.</p>

Popular Phrasals

Phrasal verbs are extremely common in everyday English conversations. Guess what – some of them also relate to animals! Let's learn some of the more interesting ones.

to beaver away (ciężko pracować) – to work hard for a long time

I've been beavering away to finish all my projects.

to chicken out (stchórzyć) – to avoid participating in something out of fear

We were supposed to do a parachute jump, but he chickened out.

to duck down (zrobić unik, szybko ukucnąć) – to crouch quickly

The ball is coming! Duck down!

to fish for sth (łowić coś, szukać czegoś) – to try to get something (usually compliments or praise) in an indirect way

”Ooh, I’m so ugly!” Stop fishing for compliments.

to horse around (wyglupiać się, dokazywać) – to play around in a silly way

Look at the kids horsing around in the playground.

to pig out (obżerać się) - to eat a lot of food quickly

What the heck, Mark? That was dinner for two, and you just pigged out by yourself!

to rat on somebody/to rat somebody out (donieść na kogoś) - to tell on somebody; to notify the authorities

He ratted me out. The cops are on the way.

to squirrel sth away (chomikować coś, schować coś na potem) – to save something for later

I squirrelled some cookies away.

Veterinary Vernacular

Canine parvovirus – psia parwowiroza	A contagious virus affecting mainly dogs and wolves. Its main symptoms are lethargy, vomiting, fever and diarrhoea.
Deworming – odrobaczanie	The process of removing parasitic worms from an animal’s digestive system.
Euthanasia – eutanazja	The act of killing an animal humanely, usually by injecting it with a combination of a sedative drug and an euthanasia solution. Euphemisms for animal euthanasia include <i>putting (the animal) down</i> and <i>putting (the animal) to sleep</i> .

Flea – pchła	A small, jumping insect that feeds on the blood of some mammals and birds. Its bite is extremely itchy.
Heartworm – dirofilaria immitis (gatunek nicienia)	A parasitic worm spread through mosquito bites. Affects mainly dogs, however the parasite can also develop and survive in the bodies of other mammals, and – rarely – humans.
Kennel cough – kaszel kennelowy	A highly contagious respiratory infection affecting dogs. The main symptom is a dry cough. Usually resolves on its own after a few days.
Mange – psia nużyca	A skin disease caused by parasitic mites. Affected animals experience fur loss.
Microchip – mikroczip	A small chip implanted under an animal’s skin. It contains information about the pet and its owner in case the animal gets lost.
Neutering – sterylizowanie	The process of removing an animal’s reproductive organ. The term specific to male animals is <i>castration</i> , while <i>spaying</i> refers to the neutering of female animals.
Rabies – wścieklizna	A viral disease affecting mammals (including humans). It’s usually passed through a bite from a rabid animal. In dogs, the symptoms may include aggression, foaming at the mouth and excessive salivating.

Vaccine – szczepionka	A substance injected into the body of an animal. Its goal is to stimulate the body's immune response against specific diseases.
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Vet – <i>pot. weterynarz</i>	Short for <i>veterinarian</i> .
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■ TASK

Fill in the gaps in the dialogue with the correct words.

human-grade, lead, bitten, rabies, vaccine, examination, treat

Vet: Hello, sir. How may I help you?

Joe: Hi. My dog, Rocky, is salivating a lot. I'm afraid he's got (1).

Vet: Let me take a look at him. Hmm... Has he been (2) by a dog lately?

Joe: No. Rocky got his rabies (3) last year and no incidents have happened since.

Vet: If he's vaccinated and wasn't bit, he shouldn't have contracted rabies. The excessive salivation may be unrelated. Nevertheless, Rocky requires a thorough (4). You can take the (5) off.

Joe: Done. Did I mention he salivates only when I'm about to give him a (6)?

Vet: It's not rabies then, it's a natural reaction!

Joe: Oh, well. That's good news. Since I'm here anyway, do you sell (7) food?

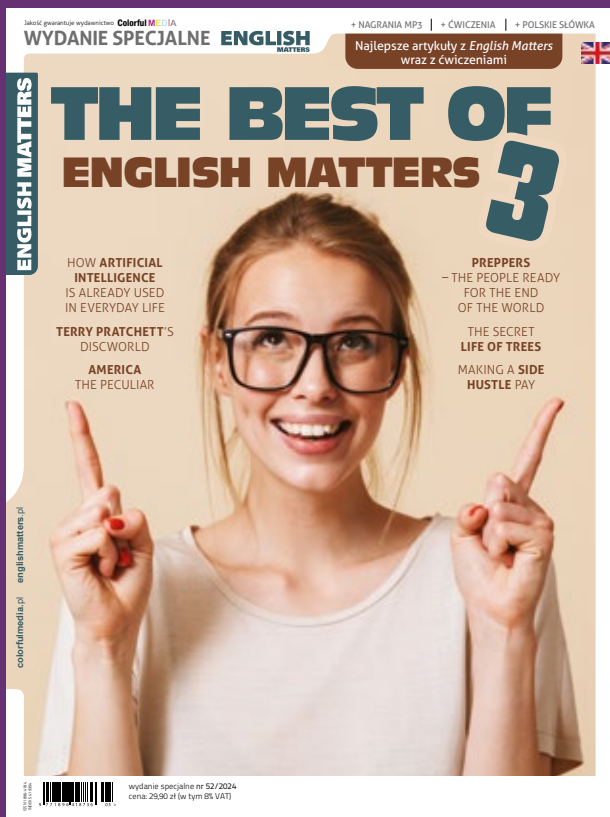
Answer Key: 1. rabies; 2. bitten; 3. vaccinate; 4. examination; 5. lead; 6. treat; 7. human-grade

He, she, or it?

One of the rules you might have been taught in school is that in English, you should always refer to animals with the pronoun *it*. However, this rule isn't necessarily reflected in everyday speech. If you know the animal's gender, it's perfectly fine to refer to it as *he* or *she*.

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