



# Watch for Whales

## Introduction

Watching orcas whales in the wild is a thrilling experience. For a brief time, we peek into their lives as they search for food, play, travel and interact with each other. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people watch Granny and her clan from whale-watch boats, private boats, kayaks and shore locations. Whenever we go whale-watching, we are visiting orcas in their home. Some people forget that their boats can harm orcas or disrupt their activities. Sometimes boats approach too fast, too close or cut across an orca's path. When boats make too much noise, they can separate orca families or interfere with their fishing and resting. Orcas need space and quiet to find food, socialize and care for their young. Be **Whale Wise** rules have been created that help boats and their people be courteous and respectful guests when visiting the orcas' home.

## Key Concepts

- ◆ Whale-watching boats are visiting the orcas in their home.
- ◆ Boats watching whales can interfere with orca feeding, navigation and communication.
- ◆ Whale watching regulations were created to protect orcas from careless boaters.

## National Science Education Standards

### Life Science:

- Characteristics of Organisms. Organisms and their Environments (K-4)
- Characteristics and Changes in Populations. Changes in Environments (K-4)

### National Council for Teachers of English/ International Reading Association Standards:

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for different purposes.
8. Students use a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

## Inquiry Questions

- ◆ Why do you think people like to watch orcas?
- ◆ How does boat noise interfere with orca echolocation? Communication? Travel? Rest?
- ◆ Why do boats get too close to orcas? What might happen?
- ◆ How would you think orcas feel when boats get too close? Approach too fast? Separate them from their families?
- ◆ How do you feel when traveling in a car with your family and another car cuts you off?
- ◆ How should a guest behave when visiting someone's home?
- ◆ How can whale-watching boats be good guests while visiting the orca's home?
- ◆ Why do we need whale-watching rules to protect orcas?

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## Activity #1- Get Off My Tale

In this activity, students experience whale-watching from human and orca viewpoints.

**Materials Needed:** Index cards, tape, markers, painter's tape to outline sea

**Preparation:**

1. Make role-play name cards (12 whale-watch boats, 8 orcas, 4 pleasure boats)
2. Outline 5' x 12' sea area with painter's tape.

**Procedure:**

1. Watch a You Tube video to go on a virtual whale watch trip.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8kcMXjPIIQ&feature=related>
2. Learn about Be **Whale Wise** rules: <http://www.bewhalewise.org/>
3. Assemble students in a designated "sea" area.
4. Assign students to be orcas, *whale-watch boats* or *pleasure boats* and distribute role-play name cards.
5. Instructions for Traffic Jam role-play:  
*Whale-watch boats and pleasure boats:* Move close to orcas. Speed up slow down. Cut across the orcas' path. Make loud noises. *Orcas:* Try to move through sea area, talk and listen to each other and stay together. Role-play for five minutes.
6. Instructions for Be Whale Wise role-play. *Whale-watch boats & pleasure boats:* Keep to side of orcas. Move slowly, stop or keep steady pace. Don't cut in front of orcas. Stay quiet so orcas can echolocate and hear each other. *Orcas:* Travel through sea area. Try to talk and listen to each other and stay together. Role-play for 5 minutes.

**Discuss:** Was it difficult for the orcas to move through the sea with all the boats in their way? Was it easier for the orca family to stay together when the boats stayed to the side? Why?

## Activity #2- Turn Down the Noise!

In this activity, students experience what it's like to be an orca trying to communicate a message with loud background noise from boats.

**Materials Needed:** recorded boat motor (or loud sounds) on device with variable volume controls

**Procedure:**

1. Ask students to sit in a long row. Tell them they will be given a whispered message and then should pass it on to the next person beside them. Recorded sounds will be played during the message relay.
2. As first student begins whispering the message, start playing the recorded motor sounds.
3. As the message passes from one student to the next, keep raising the volume until the background noise is too loud for the whispered message to be heard.
4. Ask the last person to state the message received and compare to the original message.

**Discuss:** Was it difficult to hear the message as the background noise increased? Why? Do you think the orcas can hear each other when boat motors get too loud? How would they be able to communicate and navigate?

## Activity #3-Orca Rule Poster Contest

In this activity, students design a poster that explains responsible boater behavior around orcas.

**Materials Needed:** Be *Whale Wise* brochure <http://www.bewhalewise.org/>  
poster board, markers, crayons

**Procedure:**

1. Ask students to imagine they are orcas from **Granny's Clan**. Create a poster that tells humans and boats how to behave when they travel through orca home waters. Use ideas from *Be Whale Wise*.
2. Think about: loud boat noise, boats too close to orcas, chasing or harassing orcas, approaching too fast. How close should boats get? How fast or slow?
3. Hang posters around classroom and hold a poster contest. (best art, best message)