

Nature Vocabulary and Idioms Worksheet

- SPLENDID SLOTHS -

A) FUN FACTS

Fill the gaps with the following words:

belief, benefit, detection, hooked, lungs, mammal, moths, swivel, tinge, tropical, vulnerable, weigh

Sloths have been around for over sixty million years, and until ten thousand years ago there was also even a giant sloth. These super-sized sloths called Megatherium could grow to the size of an elephant and **a)** _____ up to four tonnes!

Today sloths are found in the **b)** _____ forests of Central and South America. There are six species, two species are two-toed, and four are three-toed. Curiously though, it's the number of claws on the forelimbs that is different, as all the species have three 'toes' on their back legs. So perhaps we should call them two-fingered and three-fingered sloths!

Sloths are named for their extreme slowness. The pygmy three-toed sloth is in fact the slowest **c)** _____ in the world, moving at a speed of only 0.24 km/h.

Contrary to popular **d)** _____, however, sloths aren't lazy. Their slow-paced lifestyle is a vital part of their survival kit as it helps them conserve valuable energy. Another bonus of moving so slowly is that it helps them avoid **e)** _____ by formidable predators such as jaguars and harpy eagles who hunt using sight.

Not only are sloths slowcoaches, but their digestion is also very slow - it can take weeks to digest just one leaf!

You may have noticed that sloths often seem to have green fur. This green **f)** _____ comes from algae. It turns out that a sloth's shaggy coat is quite the ecosystem - providing a home not only to algae, but also to fungi, **g)** _____, and other insects. In return, the green colour lends the sloths camouflage, helping them blend into the canopy. Sloths may also **h)** _____ by snacking on the algae or other inhabitants in their fur.

Thanks to their anatomical design, sloths are adept at hanging upside down. Organs such as the liver, stomach and bowel are attached to their rib cage which prevents them from squashing the animal's **i)** _____ and impeding breathing. Their strong **j)** _____ claws allow them to latch onto branches securely and even to sleep suspended from the trees.

Another design attribute allows three-toed sloths to **k)** _____ their heads 270 degrees like owls, which may come in handy for keeping an eye out for predators.

Sloths are very cumbersome on the ground as they have little power in their hind legs. However, they are actually pretty strong swimmers and can even hold their breath underwater for forty minutes!

Sloths may be slow but they are three times as strong as humans. They can lift their whole body upwards using just one arm!

Sloths only come down from trees in order to poop, which they do about once a week. They are extremely **I** _____ to predators when they are on the ground and so will even give birth up in the trees!

B) Idioms with SLOW

Complete the idioms with one of the words in brackets.

1. The government was criticised for being **slow off the** _____ in buying vaccines. They should have acted faster. (*line, mark, step*)
2. Maybe I'm **slow on the** _____ **take** but I found the plot of the film really confusing at times. Didn't you? (*off, on, up*)
3. The book was **slow** _____ at first but then it started to get a lot more interesting. (*go, going, gone*)
4. Come on, **slow** _____, hurry up and have your breakfast or you're going to be late for school. (*bus, car, coach*)

Answers

Exercise A.

- a) weigh
- b) tropical
- c) mammal
- d) belief
- e) detection
- f) tinge
- g) moths
- h) benefit
- i) lungs
- j) hooked
- k) swivel
- l) vulnerable

Exercise B.

1. slow off the MARK
2. slow on the UPtake
3. slow GOING
4. slowCOACH