How Animals Sleep

Half a Brain, Midair Naps, and More | Level B2 | EnglishBridges.com

Before You Read

Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. How many hours do you usually sleep, and where and how do you like to sleep best?
2. Which animals have you seen sleeping, for example pets, farm animals, or animals in a zoo? What did they look like?
3. How might sleeping habits differ between animals that hunt and animals that are hunted, or between animals on land and in the sea?

Reading: How Animals Sleep

Most adults **drift off** for seven or eight hours at night, with the whole brain asleep at once. It feels so natural that we rarely question it. But for many animals, sleeping like a human would be risky or impossible.

Dolphins must come up to the surface to breathe, even while they rest. So they sleep with one **hemisphere** of the brain at a time, while the other half stays **alert**. Some birds do this too. Ducks at the ends of a row often keep one eye open, facing away from the group, to watch for **predators**.

Some birds even sleep while **airborne**. Great frigatebirds can fly over the ocean for up to ten days. In the air, they sleep only about 42 minutes a day, often while circling on rising air. On land, they sleep more than 12 hours a day. Common swifts are such skilled fliers that some stay in the air for about ten months. Researchers **suspect** that they sleep as they **glide**, but nobody has proved it yet.

Chinstrap penguins guarding their nests fall asleep more than 10,000 times a day, in **bursts** of about four seconds. These microsleeps **add up** to more than 11 hours a day. Other animals sleep very little. Two wild African elephants in one study slept only about two hours a day. Sperm whales sleep **upright** near the surface, in **stretches** of about ten to fifteen minutes. For these animals, there may be a **trade-off** between sleep and finding food or staying safe.

Little brown bats are the opposite. They can sleep close to 20 hours a day in their **roost**, which may help them **conserve** energy. Even upside-down jellyfish, which have no brain, seem to sleep. When scientists kept them from resting at night, they were **sluggish** the next day. Sleep may be so basic that even an animal without a brain needs it.

Vocabulary: Fill in the Blank

Complete each sentence with a word or phrase from the box. Use each one once.

hemisphere	**trade-off**	**roost**	**add up**	**glide**	**drift off**	**upright**	**suspect**	**predators**	**alert**
bursts	**stretches**	**airborne**	**sluggish**						

1. After a long day, I usually _____ in front of the television.
2. The left _____ of the brain controls the right side of the body.
3. Drivers must stay _____ on long journeys, so they should take regular breaks.
4. Lions and wolves are _____ that hunt in groups.
5. The balloon stayed _____ for three hours before it landed in a field.
6. I _____ that he forgot my birthday, because he has not called me.
7. Large birds can _____ for a long time without beating their wings.
8. The runner finished the race with short _____ of speed.
9. Ten minutes of practice a day will _____ to more than an hour a week.
10. The old lamp fell over, so I stood it _____ again.
11. Long _____ of the motorway have no service stations.
12. Working from home is a _____: you save travel time but feel more alone.
13. At sunset, the birds return to their _____ in the tall trees.
14. Too much screen time at night can leave you feeling _____ in the morning.

Word Partners: Collocations and Word Families

Part A. Collocations

Match the two halves to make common phrases. Write the letter on the line.

1. drift off	_____	**a.** upright
2. natural	_____	**b.** trade-off
3. a sudden	_____	**c.** stretch of road
4. a long	_____	**d.** hemisphere of the brain
5. conserve	_____	**e.** burst of laughter
6. make a difficult	_____	**f.** predators
7. sit	_____	**g.** your strength
8. the left	_____	**h.** to sleep

Now choose three of the phrases and write your own sentences.

Part B. Word families

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the word in brackets.

1. Some _____ birds attack penguin nests to steal eggs. (*predators*)
2. I have a _____ that my cat sleeps more than I do. (*suspect*)
3. Coffee can increase your _____ for a few hours. (*alert*)
4. Energy _____ may be one reason why bats sleep so much. (*conserve*)
5. The pilot flew a _____, a light aircraft with no engine. (*glide*)
6. The traffic moved _____ through the city center. (*sluggish*)

Comprehension Questions

Answer in full sentences.

1. How long do most adults sleep at night, and what happens to the brain?

2. Why can dolphins not sleep the way humans do, and how do they solve the problem?
3. Why do ducks at the ends of a row keep one eye open?
4. How does frigatebird sleep in the air compare with their sleep on land?
5. What do researchers suspect about common swifts, and why is it not certain?
6. How do chinstrap penguins guarding a nest get enough sleep?
7. What trade-off might elephants and sperm whales face?
8. Why might little brown bats sleep so much?
9. Why is the jellyfish finding surprising, and what does it suggest about sleep?
10. **True, False, or Not Given:** *"Common swifts sleep for about 42 minutes a day while flying."* Explain your answer using the reading.
11. **Yes, No, or Not Given:** *"The writer believes that the human way of sleeping is the safest way for every animal."* Explain your answer using the reading.
12. **Author's purpose:** Why does the writer describe the jellyfish at the end? Is it (a) to suggest that sleep may be very old and basic, (b) to show that jellyfish sleep more than bats, or (c) to explain how jellyfish find food at night?

True or False

Circle T (true) or F (false). Be ready to correct the false sentences.

1. Dolphins sleep with one half of the brain at a time. **T / F**
2. Great frigatebirds sleep more than 12 hours a day while flying. **T / F**
3. Scientists have proved that common swifts sleep while gliding. **T / F**
4. Each penguin microsleep lasts about four seconds. **T / F**
5. Penguin microsleeps add up to less than two hours a day. **T / F**
6. The wild elephants in the study slept about two hours a day. **T / F**
7. Sperm whales sleep lying flat on the sea floor. **T / F**
8. Little brown bats can sleep close to 20 hours a day. **T / F**
9. Upside-down jellyfish have a very small brain. **T / F**
10. Jellyfish that were kept from resting were sluggish the next day. **T / F**

Language Focus: Result Clauses with So ... That and Such ... That

Use **so** or **such** with **that** to show a strong cause and its result.
so + adjective / adverb + **that** + result. *The film was so boring that I fell asleep.*
such + (a/an) + adjective + noun + **that** + result. *It was such a hot night that I could not sleep.*
From the reading:
"It feels **so** natural **that** we rarely question it."
"Common swifts are **such** skilled fliers **that** some stay in the air for about ten months."
Tip: Use **so** before an adjective alone (*so tired*) and **such** before a noun (*such a long day*). In speech, *that* is often left out: *I was so tired I fell asleep.*

Part A. Sentence starters

Finish each sentence so that it is true for you.

so + adjective or adverb + that

1. Last night I was so tired that _____
2. My phone is so important to me that _____
3. Once I was so nervous that _____

such + (a/an) + adjective + noun + that

4. I once had such a busy day that _____

5. I once read such an interesting book that _____

Part B. Questions

Answer each question in a full sentence. Try to answer using so … that *or* such … that. *Then ask a partner.*

6. Have you ever been so tired that you fell asleep somewhere unusual? What happened?

7. What is the most boring class or meeting you remember? Why?

8. What is the best place you have ever visited? Why do you remember it?

9. Have you ever had a bad night's sleep that changed your whole next day? What happened?

10. Which animal would you most like to see in the wild? Why?

Discussion Questions

Discuss with a partner or in a small group. Give reasons and examples.

1. Are you a light sleeper or a heavy sleeper? What usually wakes you up?

2. Which animal in the reading has the most surprising sleep habit, in your opinion? Why?

3. Have you ever slept in a strange place, such as a bus, a plane, or a classroom? How well did you sleep?

4. Do you sleep differently in a new or unfamiliar place? What do you notice?

5. If you could sleep like one of the animals in the reading for a week, which would you choose and why?

6. Do you take naps? Are short bursts of sleep during the day useful for you?

7. What trade-offs do people make between sleep and other things, such as work, study, or social life?

8. Many students sleep very little before exams. Is this a sensible trade-off? Why or why not?

9. How do people in your country think about sleep? Is sleeping a lot seen as healthy or as lazy?

10. Should schools or workplaces change their hours so that people can sleep more? What might happen?

11. Scientists study animals with small devices attached to their bodies. Is this research fair to the animals?

12. Why do you think scientists still cannot fully explain why we need sleep?

13. Humans can use alarms, lights, and coffee to control their sleep. Has this made our lives better or worse?

14. If a pill could safely remove the need for sleep, would you take it? What would be gained and lost?

Online Practice

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