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Deer: Understanding the basics by [Gina Matson](#)

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A deer is a herbivorous mammal, Deer are considered browsers, they tend to eat the tender, most nutritious parts of trees and shrubs. A delicacy is the acorns from oak trees and the fruit from persimmons trees. Deer, love to eat their dessert first. Some of the delicacies that a deer will consume in its diet are crops, twigs, green plants, berries, fruit and some fungi. They are found hanging out in meadows at times and they will eat some grass but are usually picking out the tender broad leaf plants, like dandelions. They are ruminants, meaning they are cud-chewers. This digestive adaption is one of many that helps them avoid predators.

A female deer is called a 'doe', a baby deer is called a 'fawn', and a male deer is called a 'buck'. The deer's life span is approximately 11 to 12 years, but very few make it past 4 to 5 years old. One other factor that helps the deer's survival is its hooved feet. This helps them to run up to speeds of 45mph. They are very fast and agile and can leap as high as 9 ft from a standing position. A deer raises its tail as a warning to the others as a sign of danger as it flees its area of comfort.

A buck can be up to four feet tall to the top of his back and weigh up to 400 pounds. The doe is much smaller. A doe can have as many as three fawns, which will stay with her until she drives them away to be on their own just prior to her next litter.

Deer are very responsive to strange smell, sounds, and movement in their area of comfort. This is the advantage of their extremely keen senses. Anything that triggers these senses in an unfamiliar fashion means 'danger'. They are very quick to out-smart their enemy.

The deer's eye sight is very strong and helps them to see very well at night time. This is a great advantage to them being a nocturnal mammal. They sleep during the day and feed at night. Deer do not focus really well on solid non moving objects, they are very keen to movement. The keen sense of smell is so strong they can smell a human 400 yards away. Their hearing is 10 times the strength of a human. These very strong senses enable them to be aware of their surroundings and to respond very quickly to danger.

Deer primarily live in the wooded areas, sometimes they will be seen in fields, waterways and rural areas. It is also common now a days to see them along the roadways. These sightings out of the wooded areas are generally do to the fact they are looking for food, water or fleeing a predator. They like to sleep in heavy cover from the wind and so they aren't seen. Their coat is generally a reddish brown and changes to a more gray coat in the winter. This acts a camouflage from predators.

The deer family are the only animals in the world that have antlers. Antlers are shed and re-grow every year. Antlers are only seen on the male 'buck'. They usually branch and are bone with a velvety layer of skin which will shed when the antler is fully grown leaving bare bone.

The breeding season, otherwise called the rut, begins in the fall and runs through December, with November being the peak breeding time. During this time the buck travels a-lot looking for the doe. Sometimes the buck's will fight over a doe using its antlers to fight.

They like to travel in small groups which will generally consist of a doe and fawns or three to five bucks at a time. In the cooler weather they tend to form a herd where there may be as many as fifty to one hundred deer in the herd. This is true until the rut.

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