

 This text is based on *Dolphin vs Fish* by Mary Meinking.

Predator vs Prey

predator: an animal that hunts other animals

The dolphin

Swimming speed: 40 kilometres per hour

prey: an animal that is hunted by other animals for food

The sardine

Swimming speed: 8 kilometres per hour

Teeth pierce! Tails splash! Two animals battle in the sea. First, the dolphin – the cleverest animal in the sea. It is set against the shiny sardine, a cool water fish. These competitors live in the ocean. Both have strengths that will help them in the battle.

Did you know?

Dolphins are carnivores (meat eaters). To grow healthy they need fat in their diet, so they eat oily sardines.

Did you know?

Millions of sardines swim together in giant groups called shoals. Sardine shoals swim as though they are one fish. When a few change direction, the whole shoal turns.

Pods (groups) of dolphins follow the sardine shoals. But how can they catch fish from the wide shoal of sardines swimming by?

The dolphins dive in and try to herd thousands of sardines away from the main shoal. To give themselves some protection, the sardines group together in a ball called a baitball (this can be the size of a tennis court!). It is more difficult for a dolphin to pick out one sardine from a big group of twisting, flashing fish.



The dolphins push the baitball to the surface of the water and surround the fish, packing the sardines closer together. Some of the dolphins are like cowboys, keeping the sardines herded together; others dive into the ball to eat. They take turns to make sure they all have a chance. Not only are the dolphins attacking the sardines, but sharks approach from below to eat, and birds called gannets dive down from the sky – the water is wild with activity!

After 20 minutes it's all over. The baitball that was lost to the predators was just a small part of the giant sardine shoal, and the lucky few that remain continue with the others in the shoal.

So who is the winner?

The dolphin. Dolphins are more intelligent than sardines and work together to catch their fill.