MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

TWO-TOED SLOTH

Choloepus didactylus · also called Linnaeus's two-toed sloth

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal (family Choloepodidae)
NATIVE REGION	The Amazon basin of South America
HABITAT	Tropical rainforest canopy
DIET	Mostly leaves, plus fruit, flowers and insects
LENGTH	21 to 29 inches
WEIGHT	9 to 17 lb
BODY TEMP.	About 86 to 93°F
LIFESPAN	About 20 years in the wild
STATUS	Least Concern
OUR SLOTHS	Brooke and Sid



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

Did you know?

- Despite its name, a two-toed sloth has three claws on each back foot. Only the front feet have two.
- A sloth's fur grows from its belly toward its back, so rain runs off while it hangs upside-down.
- Algae can grow on a sloth's hair and turn its coat faintly green.
- Sloths sleep about 15 hours a day.
- Sloths are excellent swimmers and move faster in water than they ever do in a tree.

Words to know

Canopy: The top layer of a forest, made of treetops.
Metabolism: How fast a body uses energy from food.
Camouflage: Colors or patterns that help an animal blend in.
Nocturnal: Most active at night.

Think about it

1. Why does a sleeping sloth not fall out of its tree?
2. Why are sloths slow? Explain why they are not lazy.
3. How does moving slowly help protect a sloth from harpy eagles and jaguars?
4. Why are Plumpton Park's sloths inside when it is below 70°F?
5. How is a two-toed sloth different from a three-toed sloth?

Draw it

Draw a sloth hanging upside-down from a branch. Label its front claws (two), back claws (three), its green-tinted fur and the direction its hair grows.

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

STANDARDS · GRADES K–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS4-3 · K-LS1-1**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.G · 3.1.K.A**

Draw here

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/sloth/ · **Sources:** Smithsonian's National Zoo; IUCN Red List; Plumpton Park Zoo keepers.
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 3-LS4-3 (3.1.3.G) · K-LS1-1 (3.1.K.A)
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TWO-TOED SLOTH

Before and after your visit

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Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the two-toed sloth live?
Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?
☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.
☐ Canopy ☐ Metabolism ☐ Camouflage ☐ Nocturnal

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the two-toed sloth.

_____

_____

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?
☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching
☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: The Amazon basin of South America. Was your guess right?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Mostly leaves, plus fruit, flowers and insects. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

• Why are sloths slow? Explain why they are not lazy.

_____

• How does moving slowly help protect a sloth from harpy eagles and jaguars?

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT
Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.