



These notes are designed to help you to use giraffes as the focus to inspire cross-curricular work.

## Background information/facts for teachers

### Average measurements

Average male height: 5.3 m

Average female height: 4.3 m

Male weight: 1,100 – 1,932 kg

Female weight: 700 – 1,182 kg

Neck length: 2.4 m

Height at birth: 1.8 m

Weight at birth: 44 - 70 kg

The giraffe can reach a sprint speed of up to 60 km/h (37 mph) and can sustain 50 km/h (31 mph) for several kilometres

Life expectancy in the wild is 20 years.

### Range

Giraffe are only found in the wild in Africa, south of the Sahara. They inhabit savanna, scrub, open acacia woodlands and subtropical and tropical grasslands with trees and bushes.

### Reproduction

Mating can take place all year round but is most common during the rainy season. Pregnancies last for 15 months, resulting in the birth of a single calf. Giraffe give birth standing up so the calf begins life with a two metre drop! The newborn calf is able to stand within 20 minutes and will grow about 2.1 metres in its first year. At a year old, young giraffes have been weaned but remain close to the female until at least 22 months old, often remaining nearby for life.

### Adaptations

A giraffe's tongue is 45cm long and is used to tear the leaves from the trees. A giraffe can eat up to 134 kilograms of leaves a day.

The circulatory system of the giraffe has several adaptations for its great height. Its heart, which can weigh more than 11 kg (25 lb) and measures about 60 cm (2 ft) long, must generate approximately double the blood pressure required for a human to maintain blood flow to the brain. As such, the wall of the heart can be as thick as 7.5 cm (3.0 in). Giraffes have unusually high heart rates for their size, at 150 beats per minute. Giraffes have a series of valves to prevent blood flowing back into the head while the head is lowered. The blood vessels in the lower legs are under great pressure (because of the weight of fluid pressing down on them). To solve this problem, the skin of the lower legs is thick and tight; preventing too much blood from pouring into them.

The giraffe's height, good eyesight and sense of smell give it the ability to see predators from afar. Giraffes are often accompanied by zebra and wildebeest which may benefit from the giraffe as an 'early warning system'

	Prime areas of learning			Specific areas of learning			
Theme	Communication And language	Personal, social, and emotional	Physical development	Literacy	Maths	Understanding The world	Expressive arts and design
Giraffes							
	Read the book Giraffes can't dance by Giles Andreae.	Discuss feelings.	Animal dances	Read the book Giraffes can't dance by Giles Andreae.	How many children to be as tall as a giraffe.	UK v Kenya	Design poster to advertise the dance
	Describe a giraffe			Rhyming words	Height chart of other animals at the dance.	Giraffe trail	Make decorations for the dance
	Giraffe poems			alliteration	pairs		Split pin giraffe models
				Giraffe/other animal poems			Torn paper/ sponge print giraffe pictures

	Prime areas of learning			Specific areas of learning			
Theme	Communication And language	Personal, social, and emotional	Physical development	literacy	maths	Understanding The world	Expressive arts and design
Marwell Zoo visit							
	Asking questions during workshop	Zoo rules	Move like a...	A-Z colouring book	Measure children against full sized giraffe cut out and baby giraffe image.	Geography trail	patterns
	Taking turns to speak	Social story		Marwell Zoo visit booklet			

## Personal, social, and emotional

Feelings - Giraffes can't dance by Giles Andreae. How did Gerald feel when the animals laughed? How should they have behaved? Talk about the difference between laughing at and laughing with someone. Gerald had a special friend to help him – ask the children if they have ever had anyone help them to learn something new. How did they feel when they couldn't do something that everyone else could do? How did they feel once they learnt to do it?

### **At Marwell.**

Zoo rules. Go through the zoo rules with the children. Why are they necessary?

Social story. Read through the social story with the children. [EYFS Resources - Marwell Zoo](#)

Talk about expected behaviour on a school trip. What to do if worried about anything. What to do if lost etc.

## Physical development

Dance – In the story 'giraffes can't dance' the animals do a variety of dances –the children could have a go at a Scottish reel, or rock and roll (Kav Kavanagh has some good instructional videos online) or they could make up their own Gerald dance.

Carnival of the Animals by Saint Saens

### **At Marwell.**

Move like a...

## Communication

Read and discuss 'The Blind Men and the Elephant' poem.

Have a selection of animals up for the children to see. The teacher describes one of the animals – can the children work out which one is being described? Alternatively, using the animal cards ask 2 children to sit back-to-back with 1 set of cards each. Child 1 chooses a card and describes it to child 2 without saying the animal's name. Can child 2 work out which animal child 1 chose?

## **At Marwell.**

Consider booking a Hub session. There are no specific giraffe focused sessions but 'Hub sessions can take place at Evolution 2 Hub which can include information about Giraffes. [Immersive Zoo Hub Education Sessions - Marwell Zoo](#)

– During the session the children will have the opportunity to practice listening skills and taking turns to ask questions.

## **Literacy**

Read the book Giraffes can't dance by Giles Andreae.

Talk about rhyming words. Read other giraffe/animal poems.

In the story, the warthogs waltz, the rhinos rock and roll and the chimps do the cha cha – talk about alliteration. Can the children think of an animal that starts with the same sound as their name?

## **At Marwell.**

Alliteration – can the children find an animal that starts with the same sound as their name? (Marwell doesn't have animals to cover every letter of the alphabet but hopefully something will match either first name or surname of each child)

How many animals can the children find from the Marwell A-Z colouring book?

(Free download [EYFS Resources - Marwell Zoo](#) )

## **Maths**

As tall as a giraffe. An adult, male giraffe can reach 6m in height. Mark out 6m on the ground. Children lay head to foot along the line – how many does it take to complete the line? Try the same activity with some of the other animals from the 'Giraffes can't dance' story.

Elephant – up to 4m (shoulder height male African elephant)

Rhino – up to 1.7m (shoulder height male white rhino)

Lion - up to 1m (shoulder height male African lion)

Zebra – 1.5m (shoulder height Grevy's Zebra)

Pairs. In the story 'Giraffes can't dance' the animals dance in pairs. What things can the children think of that come in pairs? Ask the children to bring in an old pair of clean socks. Muddle them all up and then ask the children to sort into pairs.

Using sock template children can colour the socks to make matching pairs.

Print animal pictures onto card for a game of pairs.

### **At Marwell.**

Where do they come up to on the adult giraffe picture (outside Giraffe house)? Do they think they will be taller or shorter than a newborn giraffe (outside Giraffe house and outside the science and learning centre)?

### **Understanding the world**

Create a giraffe trail around the school to develop map reading skills. Hide toy giraffes around the area you wish to use. Read out simple instructions for the children to follow to find the giraffes.

Have pictures of the steps of the trail. Can the children put them in order? (creating a simple map)

Some children may be able to draw a picture map of the journey they took.

Compare what it is like in the UK to Kenya (where the story 'giraffes can't dance' is set)

### **At Marwell.**

Consider booking a Hub session. There are no specific giraffe focused sessions but 'Hub sessions' can take place at Evolution 2 Hub which can include information about Giraffes. [Immersive Zoo Hub Education Sessions - Marwell Zoo](#)

Lots of Marwell Wildlife's conservation work takes place in Kenya – there is information about some of the work we do in 'Wild Explorers'.



## **Expressive arts and design**

In the story 'giraffes can't dance' the animals attend the jungle dance. The children could make decorations for the dance or could design a poster or invitation for the dance.

Using the giraffe outline the children could fill in the pattern with torn paper or using sponge painting or potato printing.

Use the 'split pin giraffe' template to make your own dancing giraffe.

### **At Marwell.**

Look at animal patterns around the zoo. (Use our 'pattern' print out – attached)

The Blind Men and the Elephant  
**John Godfrey Saxe** (1816-1887)

It was six men of Indostan  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the Elephant  
(Though all of them were blind),  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy his mind.

The *First* approached the Elephant,  
And happening to fall  
Against his broad and sturdy side,  
At once began to bawl:  
"God bless me! but the Elephant  
Is very like a WALL!"

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,  
Cried, "Ho, what have we here,  
So very round and smooth and sharp?  
To me 'tis mighty clear  
This wonder of an Elephant  
Is very like a SPEAR!"

The *Third* approached the animal,  
And happening to take  
The squirming trunk within his hands,  
Thus boldly up and spake:  
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant  
Is very like a SNAKE!"

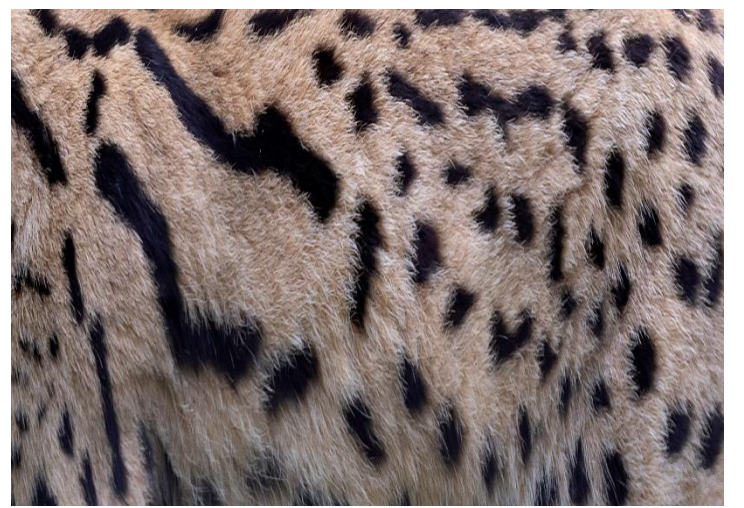
The *Fourth* reached out an eager hand,  
And felt about the knee  
"What most this wondrous beast is like  
Is mighty plain," quoth he:  
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant  
Is very like a TREE!"

The *Fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,  
Said: "E'en the blindest man  
Can tell what this resembles most;  
Deny the fact who can,  
This marvel of an Elephant  
Is very like a FAN!"

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun  
About the beast to grope,  
Than seizing on the swinging tail  
That fell within his scope,  
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant  
Is very like a ROPE!"

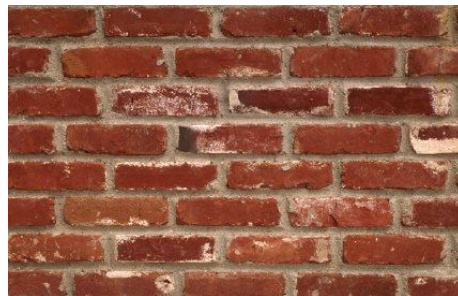
And so these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion  
Exceeding stiff and strong,  
Though each was partly in the right,  
And all were in the wrong!

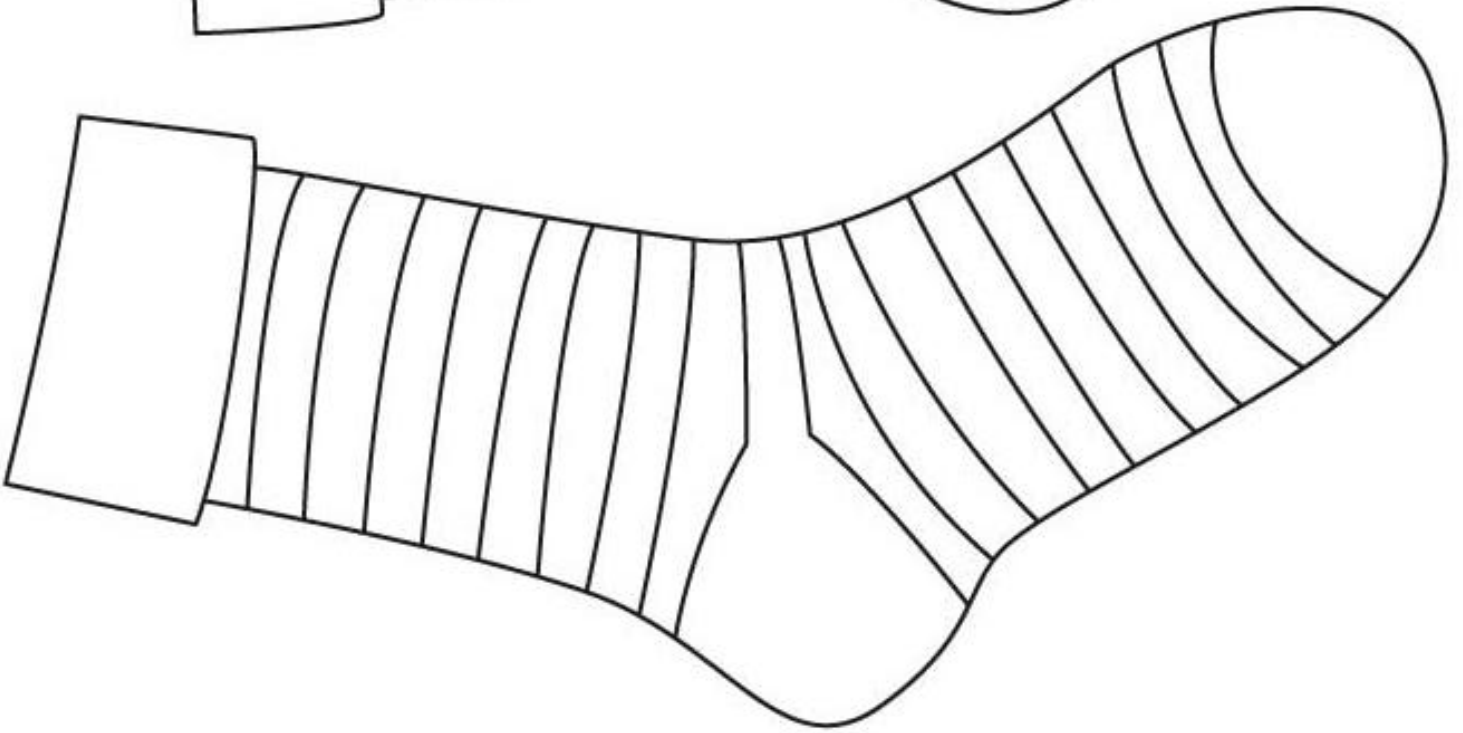
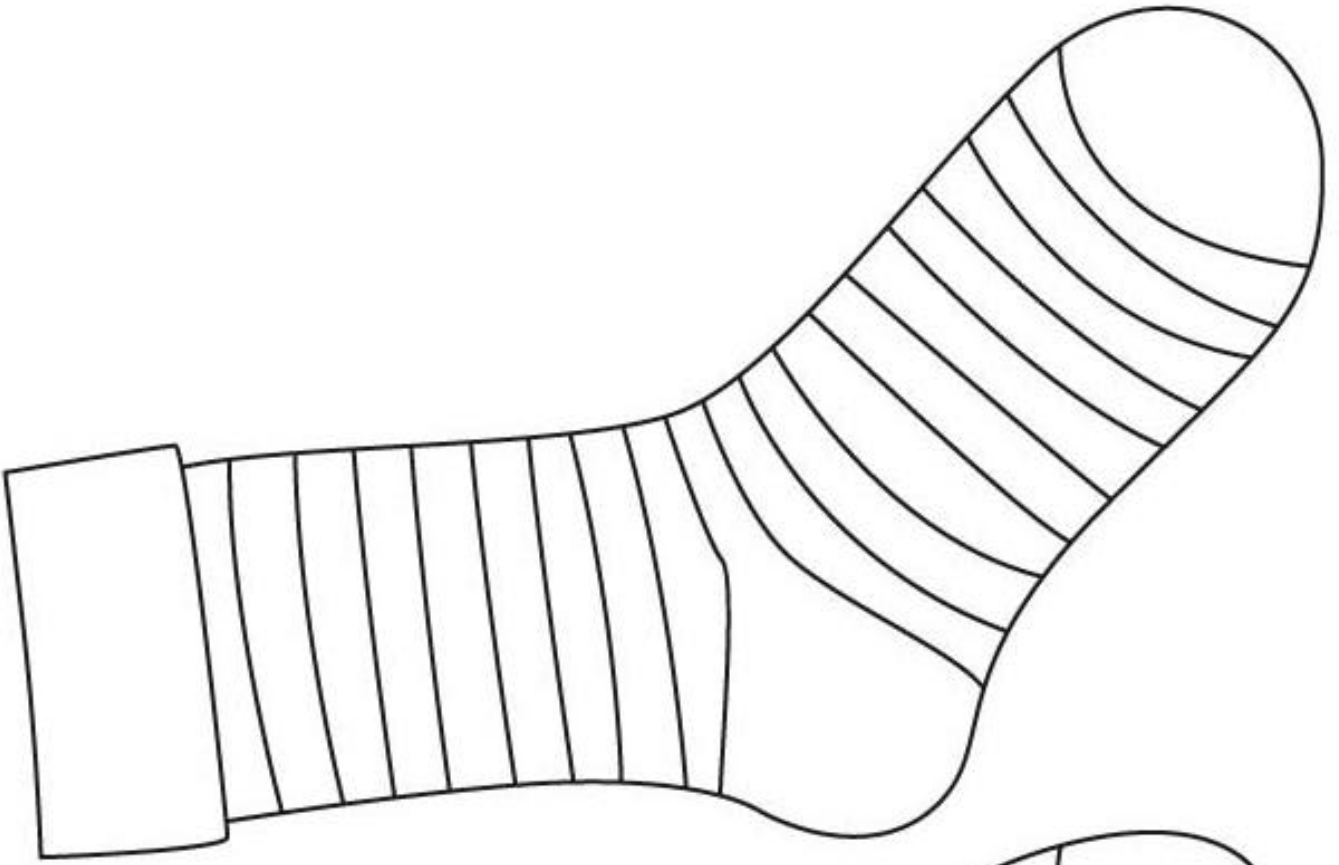
Look for these patterns at the zoo.

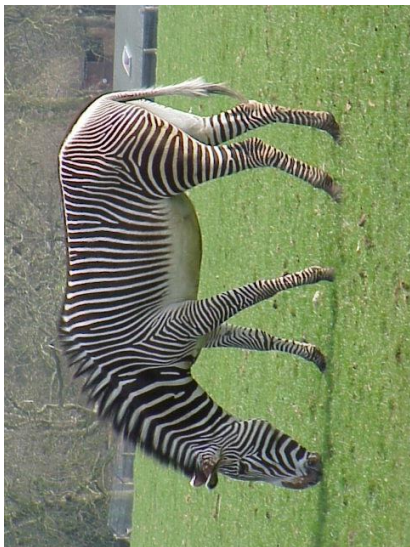
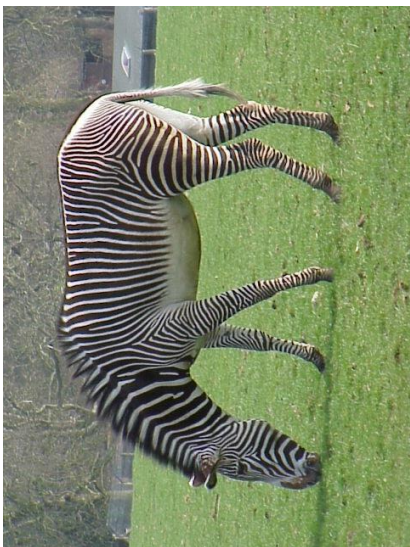
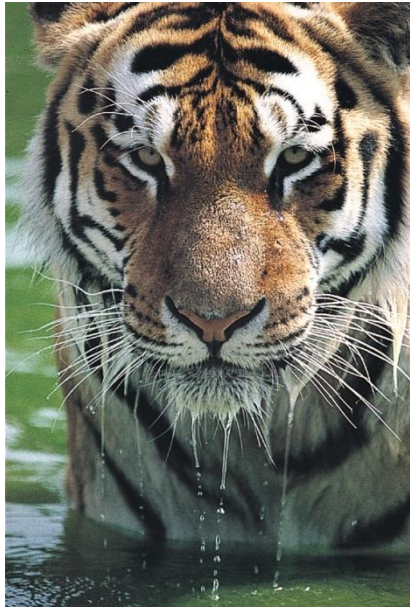
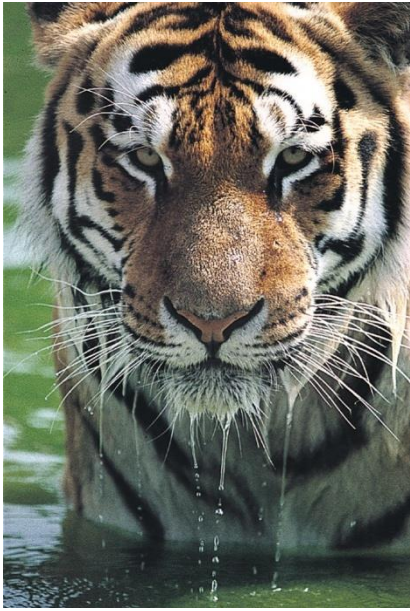


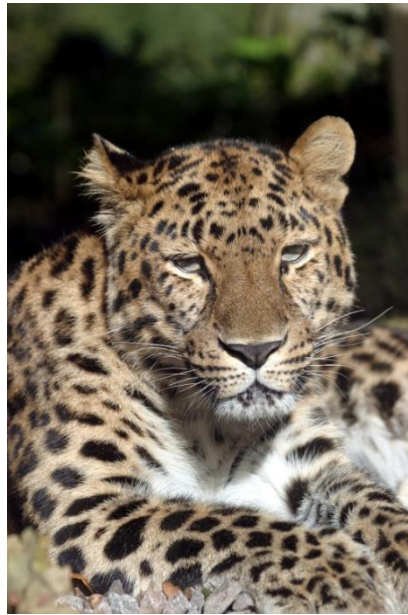
(Tiger, snow leopard, giraffe, zebra, penguin, serval)

Look for these patterns out and about.





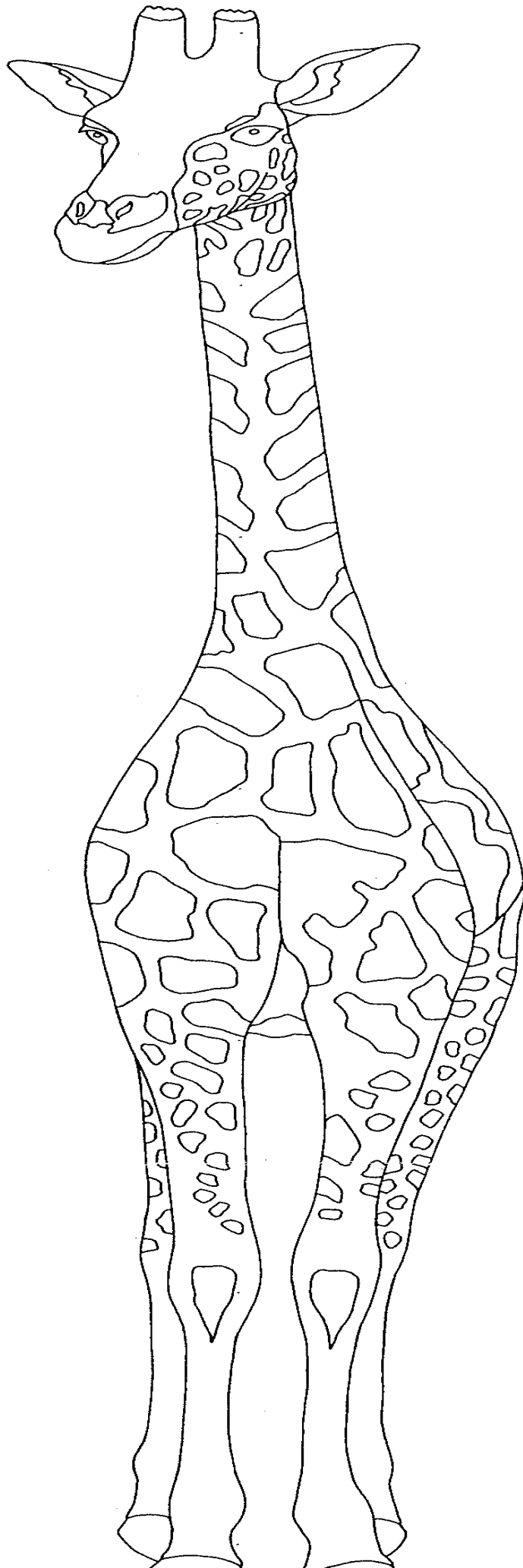




Marwell's rules for visitors:

- **Do not cross safety barriers.** The barriers are there for your protection. Although our animals are captive bred, they are not tame!
- **Do not feed or tease the animals.** Our animals are fed a carefully balanced diet and additional feeding may cause illness or even death. Litter, pencils, coins etc. thrown into animal enclosures can also kill.
- **Do not use whistles.** Many animals use a whistle sound as an alarm call.
- **Do not run or shout in the animal houses.** It may scare the animals.
- **Do not play on the railway lines.** Even if our train isn't running a fall or bump could cause injury
- **Supervision:** All children up to the age of 16 years must be closely supervised (i.e. every child must be within sight of an adult leader).





Giraffe outline for art

Split pin giraffe template

