

WHY THE BEAR HAS A SHORT TAIL

Have you ever seen a bear at the zoo? Did you see how short his tail was? I will tell you why the bear has a short tail.

One very cold day in winter, a fox saw some men. The men were taking home a lot of fish. The fox jumped on their wagon. He threw off some of the best fish until he had enough for his dinner. Then the fox jumped from the wagon and began to eat the fish. While he was eating, a bear came along.

"Good morning," said the bear, "those are very fine fish. How did you catch¹ them?"

"Yes, they are very good," said the fox. "If you go fishing with me tonight, I will show you how to catch fish."

"I'd love to come with you," said the bear. "I will bring my hook and line² too."

"You don't need a hook and line," said the fox. "I always catch fish with my tail. Your tail is much longer than mine, so you can catch fish even better."

At sunset³ the bear met the fox. They went across the frozen river until they came to a small hole⁴ in the ice.

"Now, Mr. Bear," said the fox, "sit down here on the ice and put your tail through the hole. You must sit still for a long time. That's the best way to catch fish. Wait until many fish take hold of⁵ your tail. Then pull with all your might⁶."

The bear sat very still for a long time. At last he began to feel cold and he moved a little.

"Ow!" he cried. His tail had begun to freeze⁷ in the ice. "Isn't it time to pull out the fish?" said the bear.

"No, no," said the fox. "Wait until more fish have taken hold of your tail. You are very strong. You can wait a little longer."

So the poor bear waited until it was almost morning. Just then some dogs began to bark⁸ on the bank of the river. The bear was so afraid that he jumped up quickly and pulled with all his might, but his tail was frozen fast in the ice. He pulled and pulled until the tail broke off.

The fox ran away laughing. Ever since then, bears' tails have been short.

¹ catch - fangen

² hook and line - Angelhaken und -schnur

³ sunset – Sonnenuntergang

⁴ hole - Loch

⁵ take hold of – sich an etwas festbeißen

⁶ might - Kraft

⁷ freeze - festfrieren

⁸ bark - bellen

EXERCISE 1 True or wrong?	T	W
a) The story takes place in summer.		
b) The fox stole some fish.		
c) The fox played a trick on the bear.		
d) The bear normally uses a hook and line to catch fish.		
e) The fox and the bear met in the morning.		
f) The fox caught a lot of fish with his tail.		
g) The bear's tail froze fast in the ice.		

EXERCISE 2 Fill in the correct verb in the simple past!

run – jump – freeze – steal – break – play – tell – go – sit (2x) – run – put – want – hear

a) The fox _____ a trick on the bear.

b) The fox _____ on a wagon and _____ some fish.

c) He _____ the bear that he had caught these fish.

d) The bear _____ to catch fish, too.

e) They _____ to the river together.

f) The bear _____ down on the ice and _____ his tail through a hole.

g) He _____ there until it was morning.

h) Then they _____ the barking (das Bellen) of dogs.

i) His tail _____ fast in the ice. Then it _____ off.

j) The fox _____ away laughing.