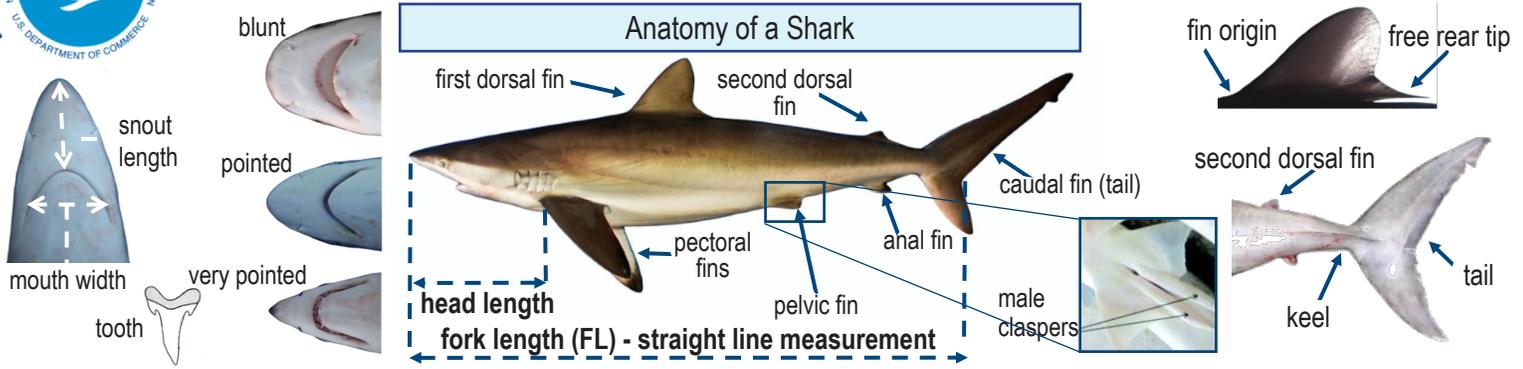




# Shark Identification and Federal Regulations

Recreational Fishery of the U.S. Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean



**Prohibited species are underlined in red**

Federal fishing permit required in federal waters. Purchase at [hmspermits.noaa.gov](https://hmspermits.noaa.gov). HMS recreational permit holders that fish for sharks will need to obtain a shark endorsement.

Authorized species	Minimum size (fork length)	Bag limit (per trip)
Smoothhound Shark	None	None
Atlantic sharpnose Shark	None	1 per person
Bonnethead Shark	None	1 per person
Hammerheads (great, scalloped, and smooth)*	78 inches	1 hammerhead, or other shark per vessel
Other sharks	54 inches	

Recreational anglers are required to use non-offset, non-stainless steel circle hooks except when fishing with flies or artificial lures.

All ridgeback sharks are prohibited, except **Tiger and Smoothhound**. Prohibited ridgeback sharks include **Bignose, Caribbean Reef, Dusky, Galapagos, Night, Oceanic Whitetip, Sandbar, and Silky**. For details on prohibited species, please refer to the Prohibited Species Placard.

Ridgeback sharks have an **interdorsal ridge** (a visible line, or crease of raised skin between dorsal fins)

**Tiger Shark:** blunt snout; markings fade with age; max. size 15 feet; coastal and offshore

**Oceanic Whitetip Shark:** large, rounded first dorsal fin; mottled white coloration on tips of most fins; Young sharks have black mottling on most fins; do not always have interdorsal ridge; max. size 8 ft; offshore. **PROHIBITED. CANNOT BE RETAINED.**

**Smoothhound:** (a.k.a. smooth dogfish and Florida/Gulf smoothhound) Pre-dorsal ridge present; second dorsal fin slightly smaller than first dorsal fin and much larger than anal fin; max. size 5ft; coastal and offshore

**Spiny Dogfish:** white spots; spines on front of both dorsal fins; no anal fin; Max. size 4 ft; coastal and offshore. There are no recreational restrictions for **Spiny Dogfish**

**Scalloped Hammerheads, Great Hammerheads, and Smooth Hammerheads**  
 \*Cannot be retained in the U.S. Caribbean or if tuna, swordfish, or billfish are onboard

**Scalloped Hammerhead:** pointed snout; Max. size 11 ft; coastal and offshore

**Great Hammerhead:** not pointed snout; Max. size 15 ft; coastal and offshore

**Smooth Hammerhead:** no indent snout; Max. size 12 ft; coastal and offshore

The is no minimum size for **Atlantic Sharpnose** or **Bonnethead Sharks**

**Atlantic Sharpnose Shark:** pointed snout; white spots, usually; labial furrow; Max: size 3 ft; coastal and offshore; similar species: **Smalltail** sharks have very reduced labial furrows and **Caribbean Sharpnose** sharks lack white spots.

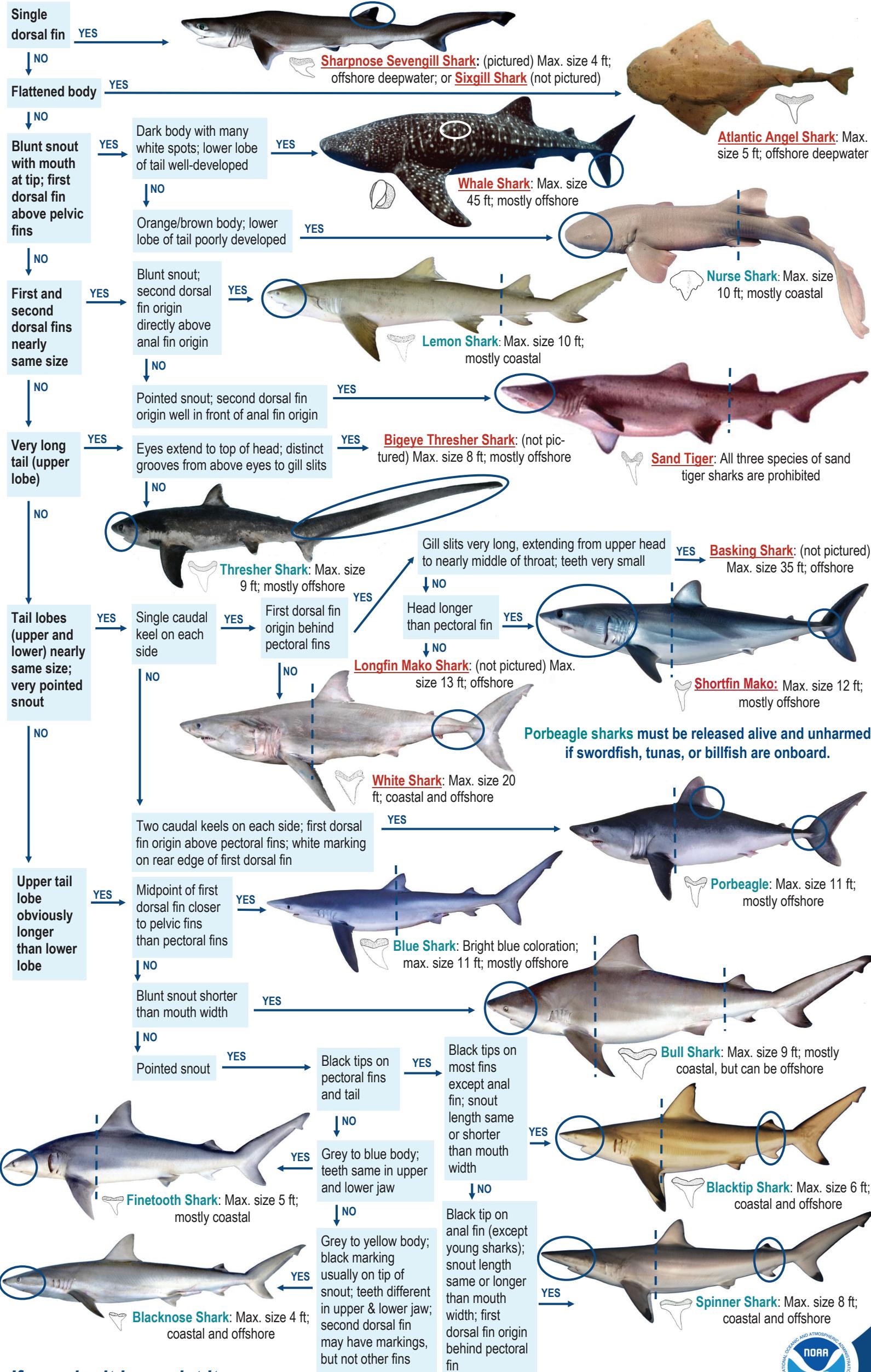
**Bonnethead:** shovel-shaped head; small, black spots on body; max. size 4 ft; mostly coastal

All sharks are not identical. These are common characteristics. Young sharks can vary in appearance from adults. Maximum sizes are approximate.



*If you don't know, let it go.*

# Use this key to identify non-ridgeback sharks



**Porbeagle sharks must be released alive and unharmed if swordfish, tunas, or billfish are onboard.**

**If you don't know, let it go**

