

Frogs and Tadpoles

Fact Sheet for Adults

General Facts

- Frogs are a group of small, tailless amphibians. They usually have long back legs for jumping. Their skin is usually moist and smooth.
- Amphibians are cold-blooded animals that have a backbone. Amphibians typically have aquatic gill-breathing larvae followed by adults which develop lungs and can live on land. There are many different types of amphibians including frogs, toads, newts, salamanders and caecilians (worm or snake-like amphibians that live underground, also called 'blindworms').
- The word 'amphibian' comes from the Greek words 'amphi' which means 'both kinds' and 'bios' meaning 'life'. So amphibian means 'both kinds (or double) life' referring to the fact that they spend part of their lives in water and part on land.
- Frogs live in many places around the world – except for Antarctica. There are over 4000 different types of frogs found around the world with the greatest range found in tropical rainforests.
- Adult frogs can generally be described as having a small, stout bodies, protruding eyes and long legs which fold underneath their body. Adults also do not have tails although their larvae, tadpoles, do.
- Frogs are able to live in water and on dry land. Some species of frogs have also adapted for living underground or in trees. Frogs breathe and take on moisture through their skin. Their skin needs to stay moist in order for them to breathe. They also have lungs to breathe. When underwater they only use their skin for breathing.
- Frogs typically lay their eggs in water. They lay several eggs in a large group called frogspawn. The eggs hatch into small aquatic larva called tadpoles.
- A tadpole is described as the aquatic larva of an amphibian. They breathe through gills and they do not have legs until a later stage of their life cycle. They usually have tails though this can also change throughout their life cycle. The larvae of most amphibians are called tadpoles but the term is usually used to describe frog and toad larvae.

General Facts

- The life cycle of a frog can be described in 4 main stages: An adult frog lays eggs (frogspawn) in water, the eggs hatch into tiny tadpoles, the tadpoles grow and change into froglets and finally the froglets grow and change into adult frogs.
- The word 'tadpole' comes from Middle English with 'tadde' meaning toad and 'poll' meaning head.
- Tadpoles eat algae and as they grow they also eat small insects and water plants.
- The process of transforming from a tadpole into a frog is described by the word metamorphosis. This means a 'change of form' and can be used to describe other changes like a caterpillar changing into a butterfly.
- Frogs are cold-blooded which means that their bodies are the same temperature as the air or water around them.
- Frogs have long, powerful back legs and webbed feet which help them to be good swimmers.
- Frogs have many predators so use a variety of skills to protect themselves. Tropical frogs are often brightly coloured to scare off predators. They also use round disks at the end of their toes to act as suckers and climb trees. Some tree frogs also have sticky webbing between their toes and fingers that helps them to climb more easily. Other frogs use camouflage to blend into their surroundings and hide from predators.
- Frogs and toads share many similarities but there are also some differences between them. Although they are both types of amphibians, toads tend to spend less time near water and often have drier, bumpier skin than frogs. Toads often have shorter back legs and prefer to crawl rather than hop. The eggs of frogs and toads also look different - frogs lay eggs that are grouped together whereas toads lay eggs in long chains.

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Fun Facts

- Tadpoles are known by other names, like polliwogs or porwiggles.
- Scientists have found fossils of frogs that date back to the Jurassic period!
- Frogspawn may contain thousands of eggs but many do not survive to become frogs.
- Some frogs can jump up to 20 times their own body length in a single jump!
- Herpetology (from the Greek, meaning 'to creep') is the study of amphibians and reptiles. Batrachology is just the study of amphibians.
- In most species of frogs, only the males croak. They croak to show other frogs their territory and to attract female frogs. Each species of frog has its own croak.
- A group of frogs is called an army!
- Frogs do not drink water – they absorb it through their skin.
- The world's largest frog is the Goliath frog. It can grow to be about 30cm long and weigh around 3kg. They live in rainforests in Africa.
- Frogs are considered lucky in many cultures. Ornamental frogs are often given as gifts to bring good luck to the recipients.
- In 2010, several children became ill after kissing frogs - influenced by the film 'The Princess and the Frog'.