



Word of the Day: Amphibian

Animal classification is when we group together animals that share similar traits into different categories. Classification helps scientists understand how different animals are related to each other. It is important for veterinarians to know the specific characteristics that define different groups of animals.

Many of the animals we see are called **vertebrates** because they have a backbone. Mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish are all vertebrates!

Amphibians are cold-blooded animals with thin skin. Frogs, newts, and salamanders are all amphibians!

Discussion Question

- What is your favorite amphibian?

Examples of Amphibians



**Green Tree
Frog**



Cane Toad



**Red-Spotted
Newt**



**Yellow-Spotted
Salamander**



Caecilian

Children's Resources: Amphibians

Amphibian Characteristics

How can you tell if an animal is an amphibian?



Thin, Porous Skin

Amphibian skin is porous, which means there are little holes in the skin that let water and air through. Most amphibians can breathe through their porous skin, which is usually also quite slimy.

Cold-Blooded

Amphibians are cold-blooded, which means they cannot generate their own body heat. Cold-blooded animals must use their environment to warm or cool their bodies.



Lays Eggs

Amphibians lay tiny, gel-like eggs in water. These eggs have a soft skin rather than a hard shell. Amphibian babies are called either larvae or tadpoles and live underwater before becoming adults.

Metamorphosis

While amphibians are born in the water, their bodies transform (called metamorphosis) so they can survive on land. Frogs, for example, begin life as tadpoles before growing lungs, arms, and legs to breathe and move on land.



Children's Resources: Amphibians

Water & Land Adaptations

Amphibians are unique because most can live on land *and* in water. Below are some adaptations from different amphibians that allow them to inhabit the best of both worlds.

Water



Gills & Tail

Baby amphibians are called larvae. Larvae, such as tadpoles, have gills to breathe underwater and a tail to help them swim.



Eyelids

Amphibians have a third, clear eyelid that both protects their eyes and allows them to see underwater while swimming.



Thin, Porous Skin

Amphibians breathe through their skin while underwater due to little holes in their skin that let oxygen through.



Webbed Feet

Frogs in particular can have webbed feet (skin between the toes) which makes them excellent swimmers.

Land



Lungs

Adult amphibians have lungs to breathe air when on land. Baby amphibians, instead, have gills to breathe underwater.



Arms & Legs

Many adult amphibians grow arms and legs to help them move around while on land.

Activities



PreK - 2nd Grade

Amphibian Dress-Up

Materials: flippers (webbed feet), frog eyes headbands, fruit leather "frog" tongue

- Dressing up is a fun way to learn more about animals! Your child can explore different amphibian characteristics through costume play.
- Gather different amphibian costume items, such as frog eye headbands, swimming flippers for webbed feet, fruit leather for a pretend "frog tongue", etc. Don't forget to add items to your amphibian's environment, such as paper lily pads or water to splash in!

Toad Abode

Materials: clay pot, rocks, non-toxic glue, non-toxic paint, paintbrushes

- If you have a garden, making a toad abode can be a fun afternoon project for your child!
- Decorate a clay pot with non-toxic, washable paint and/or decorative rocks with non-toxic glue.
- Afterwards, bury the pot halfway in the soil or raise the pot on top of rocks. Make sure you place it in a moist area for any amphibians that may want to stop by!
- For more information on Toad Abodes, check out this article from the [Houston Arboretum & Nature Center](#).

Leap Frog

Materials: green sidewalk chalk

- Play a game of leap frog with a twist! Create lily pads on the ground using green chalk. Then, encourage your child to hop like a frog from lily pad to lily pad!