

Amphibians

¹ Amphibians are cold-blooded animals with moist skin. Frogs and toads are amphibians.

² Amphibians do not have hair, feathers, or claws. The word "amphibian" comes from Greek and means "living a double life." That is, amphibians have two stages of life.

Most amphibians start their lives in water. When the young grow up, they can live both in water and on land.



³ Amphibians can be divided into three groups - frogs and toads, salamanders and newts, and caecilians [pronounced sesil'eens]. Scientists have found over 4000 species of amphibians. About 3500 species of the amphibians are frogs and toads.

⁴ Frogs and toads do not have tails. They have squat bodies with powerful hind limbs for jumping. Frogs have smooth skin and long limbs. Toads have warty skin and short limbs.

⁵ Salamanders and newts have long, slender bodies with tails. The four limbs of salamanders and newts are more evenly sized. Many people have troubles distinguishing between salamanders and lizards. Lizards are not amphibians. They are reptiles. The biggest difference between salamanders and lizards are their skin - lizards have scales but salamanders do not.

⁶ Caecilians look like earthworms. They do not have limbs. Most caecilians live underground in damp places. So, what is the difference between caecilians and earthworms? Earthworms do not go through two stages of life and, they do not have backbones, jaws, and teeth. Interestingly, even though caecilians and earthworms have similar appearance, caecilians eat earthworms.

⁷ Amphibians lay eggs, and a clear, jelly-like substance surrounds each egg. The eggs are either in water or in damp places to prevent them from drying out. After hatching, amphibian larvae, sometimes called pollywogs or tadpoles, live in water. They have gills at the sides of their heads and they use gills to breathe underwater.

⁸ Amphibians go through a stage called metamorphosis. Metamorphosis means a complete change of appearance, lifestyle, and even diet! During this time, most amphibians grow limbs, except for caecilians. For frogs and toads, their tails disappear. Instead of gills, most amphibians have lungs to help them breathe after metamorphosis.

⁹ Are amphibians defenseless because they have soft skin and do not have claws? No!

Poison dart frogs have toxic skin that is brightly colored to warn predators. Most skin toxins only cause a bad taste to discourage predators. However, some frogs and toads are quite poisonous. Salamanders whip their tails to fend off predators. Many salamanders can break off a part of their tail to distract predators so they can slip away. Later on, a new tail will grow back!

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Name _____



Date _____

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1. Which of the following best describes amphibians?
☐ (A) Newts are amphibians.
☐ (B) Amphibians are warm-blooded animals.
☐ (C) Amphibians have hair.
☐ (D) Butterflies are amphibians.
2. Most amphibian larvae live in water.
☐ (A) False
☐ (B) True
3. Which of the following is true about metamorphosis?
☐ (A) Caecilians have limbs after metamorphosis.
☐ (B) Amphibians use lungs to breathe before metamorphosis.
☐ (C) Frogs have tails after metamorphosis.
☐ (D) Amphibians need to go through metamorphosis.
4. Which of the following animals are amphibians?
☐ (A) Snakes
☐ (B) Butterflies
☐ (C) Whales
☐ (D) Newts
5. Some frogs break off a part of their tail to distract predators so they can escape.
☐ (A) False
☐ (B) True
6. Salamanders have scales. Lizards have moist and smooth skin.
☐ (A) False
☐ (B) True
7. Which of the following statements is not true?
☐ (A) Salamanders are amphibians.
☐ (B) Lizards are amphibians.
☐ (C) Frogs do not have tails after metamorphosis.
☐ (D) All amphibians are cold-blooded animals.

Amphibians - Answer Key

- 1 ☐ C Newts are amphibians.
- 2 ☐ B True
- 3 ☐ D Amphibians need to go through metamorphosis.
- 4 ☐ D Newts
- 5 ☐ A False
- 6 ☐ A False
- 7 ☐ B Lizards are amphibians.