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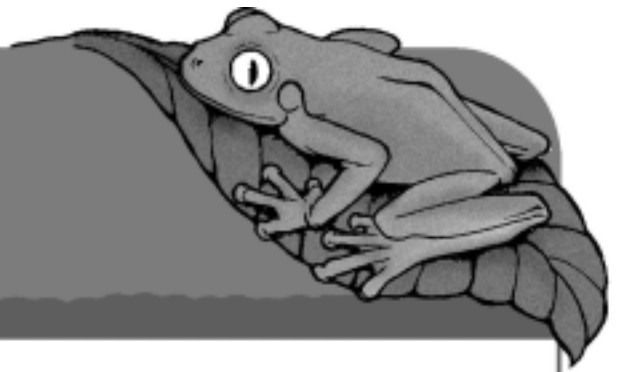
FROGS:

Awesome Amphibians



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What is a Frog?

The frog is a member of the group of animals known as amphibians. Amphibians begin their lives in the water. They have tails to swim and gills to breathe. They then develop into adults which live on land and use lungs to breathe air. Frogs start life as tadpoles and then develop into adult frogs.

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This tadpole has just started the transformation process. Tiny legs are visible below the tail.



A red-eyed tree frog.

As adults, frogs still need plenty of water to survive. Their skin needs to stay moist, because as well as breathing through their lungs they also breathe through their skin. As a result, most frogs live close to water – in ponds, swamps, or creeks. It also means that many frogs are nocturnal. They are more active at night when the sun cannot dry out their skin.

Frogs can be as small as one centimetre long and as long as thirty centimetres. They have big back legs for hopping and jumping, and smaller front legs.



This frog is a fully grown adult.

Frog species which swim a lot have webbed toes, to make swimming easier.

Frogs can be very noisy. Their loud croaks can make them sound much bigger than they are. They croak to attract other frogs. This is called a mating call.

There are over 5000 species of frog. They can be found in most countries of the world – in both warm and cold climates, living in deserts and swamps and even in trees. Some people even keep frogs as pets.

Did you know?

Fear of frogs is called **ranidaphobia**.

Fear of toads is **bufonophobia**.

Fear of all amphibians is **batrachophobia**.





Frogs and Toads

Frogs and toads are closely related and, at first glance, it is hard to tell whether an animal is a frog or a toad. Both are amphibians, but frogs belong to the animal family Ranidae and toads belong to the family Bufonidae.



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This American toad (*Bufo americanus*) has rough, bumpy skin.



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This poison dart frog (*Dendrobates auratus*) has smooth, moist skin.

Appearance

Although frogs and toads both have four legs and a similar body shape, frogs usually have a narrower body, with a more defined waistline. Toads have a shorter body, which is flatter and wider.

Frogs' back legs are usually longer, making them better hoppers than toads, and their feet are usually webbed for swimming. Toads have shorter, more muscular hind legs, and can walk.

Frog skin tends to be smoother and moist, because they stay damp. Toads have bumpy or warty skin and are dry to touch, because they are often found further from water. So, if you touch a frog, it will feel slimy or velvety, while a toad will feel a little rough.

A frog's eyes are often bulgy, standing out from the head. A toad's eyes are usually set into the head. Behind a toad's eyes are sacs (the parotoid glands) containing poison, which they release when threatened – for example, if bitten by a predator. Frogs don't have these poison sacs, although some frogs do have poisonous skin.

Habitat

Another way of telling a frog from a toad is by where it is found. Generally, frogs spend their lives in or near water or moist surroundings. Toads need water or moisture to reproduce, but often live away from water.

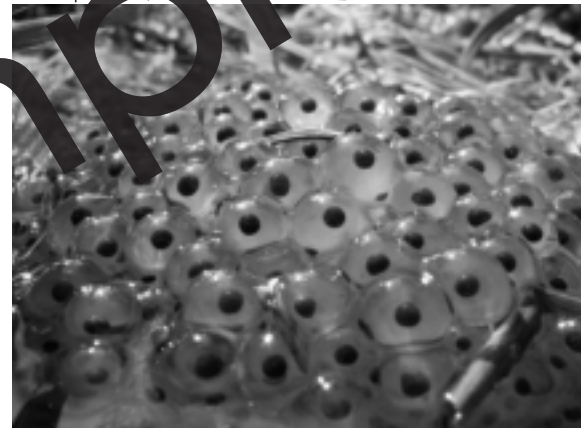
Frogs can be found on every continent except Antarctica. Toads are also found in most parts of the world, but are not native to Australia, New Zealand, some parts of Africa and Antarctica. Some toads have been introduced into these parts of the world.

When they reproduce, frogs lay their eggs in clusters or clumps,

while toads lay eggs in long chains or strings. Some toads (nectophrynoidea) don't lay eggs at all – they bear live young.

While these differences can help to decide whether an animal is a frog or a toad, it is sometimes still hard to decide. Some frogs, for example, have bumpy skin, and some toads will be found near water.

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Frog eggs clump together at the edge of the water.

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Toad eggs in strings.

© iStockphoto.com/Eric Delmar



The Cane Toad

The cane toad (*Bufo marinus*) was deliberately introduced into Queensland, Australia in 1935. Scientists hoped that the toad would control beetles which were a pest to sugar cane crops. Instead of getting rid of the pest, cane toads became pests themselves.

Since 1935 cane toads have spread throughout northern Australia, almost to Western Australia and down into New South Wales. They are a threat to native species because they eat smaller animals and are

poisonous to bigger animals which try to eat them. They also breed prolifically and so compete with native animals for space, food and shelter.

One of Australia's biggest pests, there is no known way to control or eradicate the cane toad effectively.

Did you know?

A group of frogs is called an **army**.

A group of toads is called a **knot**.