

Name _____



How Does a Catfish Move?

Catfish are expert swimmers, built for life in water. While they cannot fly, run, or climb, they are specially designed to move efficiently through rivers, lakes, and even murky ponds. Their movements may not be the fastest in the fish world, but they are highly effective for survival.

Catfish swim by using their fins and powerful tail. They move in a side-to-side motion, much like other fish. The tail, also

known as the caudal fin, is the main source of propulsion. With every swish of their tail, catfish push themselves forward. Their pectoral fins, located on the sides of their body, help them steer and balance as they glide through the water.

One unique feature of catfish movement is how they interact with the bottom of their watery homes. Catfish are bottom-dwellers, meaning they spend much of their time near the riverbed or lake floor. They use their pelvic fins to stabilize themselves when resting or foraging for food along the bottom. Their barbels, or whisker-like feelers, don't help them swim, but they do assist in finding food by sensing the environment as the catfish moves.

Catfish are not built for speed. Instead, their swimming style focuses on energy efficiency. This allows them to conserve energy for hunting, avoiding predators, or migrating to new habitats. Some species of catfish can even swim backward! This ability helps them navigate tight spaces or escape from danger.

In addition to swimming, some catfish species, like the walking catfish, have a surprising skill—they can move on land! The walking catfish uses its pectoral fins to “walk” short distances when searching for a new water source. It wiggles its body and pushes itself along, making it one of the most unusual movers in the fish world.

From swimming with steady movements to “walking” on land, catfish use their unique body features to explore and survive in their environments. Their ability to adapt their movement to different situations is just another reason why catfish are such fascinating creatures.