

Name _____

Frog Families

Frogs are fascinating animals with amazing life cycles. You might already know that frogs go through big changes in their lives, but did you know that their babies have special names? Let's hop into the world of frogs and learn about their young and how they grow up!

A frog's baby is called a tadpole. When a mother frog lays her eggs, she usually does so in water. Each egg is small, round, and usually coated with a jelly-like substance that helps protect it. A group of frog eggs is called a "spawn," and it can sometimes look like a big clump of clear bubbles floating in ponds or lakes. When these eggs hatch, the tiny creatures that come out look nothing like adult frogs. They don't have legs, they don't have lungs, and they definitely don't hop! Instead, they look more like tiny fish with tails. These little "fish" are the tadpoles!

Once they hatch, tadpoles begin a journey of change that will eventually turn them into frogs. At first, they use gills to breathe underwater, just like fish. They swim around and eat tiny plants, algae, and sometimes even other smaller tadpoles if food is scarce. As they grow, tadpoles go through a process called metamorphosis. This means they will slowly change shape, growing legs, and developing lungs so they can breathe air. Eventually, they lose their tails and become fully formed frogs, ready to leave the water and start life on land.

Some animals, like birds and mammals, spend a lot of time caring for their young. They feed them, protect them, and teach them how to survive. Frogs, on the other hand, are much more independent creatures. For most frog species, once the mother frog lays her eggs, her job is done. She hops away, and the eggs are left to fend for themselves. The young tadpoles hatch and grow all on their own without any help from their parents.

However, there are a few unique frog species that do things differently! For example, the Surinam toad carries her eggs on her back, where they are safely hidden under her skin until they hatch. And some species of poison dart frogs watch over their eggs, making sure they stay moist and safe from predators. Sometimes, these parent frogs will even carry their tiny tadpoles to small pools of water, like puddles in a tree, to give them a safe place to grow up.

Frogs are independent by nature, which means that most of their babies must take care of themselves from the start. Because of this, many frog eggs don't survive. They might be eaten by fish or other animals before they can even hatch. That's why frogs lay hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of eggs at once. Even though many of these eggs won't make it, a few will survive and grow into adult frogs, continuing the life cycle.

Frogs live on every continent except Antarctica, and they've adapted to all kinds of environments. Some live in rainforests, others in deserts, and a few even live high up in the mountains. This variety in habitats means that different types of frogs have developed different ways to help their babies survive, like the Surinam toad and poison dart frog. These adaptations make frogs one of the most interesting creatures in the animal kingdom!

