

Name _____



How Does a Giraffe Move?

Giraffes are fascinating animals known for their long necks and towering height. But how do these gentle giants move around? Giraffes cannot fly, climb, or swim, but they are excellent walkers and runners. Their movement is unique because of their long legs and unusual gait.

When walking, giraffes use a movement called "pacing." In this style of walking, they move both legs on the same side of their body at the same time. This gives them a swaying motion as they move. Despite their unusual walk, giraffes are very steady and can cover long distances with ease.

When giraffes need to move quickly, they can run surprisingly fast. They can reach speeds of up to 35 miles per hour for short distances. However, they cannot maintain this speed for long. Their long legs allow them to take huge strides, which helps them escape predators in the wild.

Another interesting fact about giraffe movement is how they bend down to drink water. Since their legs are so long, giraffes have to spread them wide and lower their necks carefully to reach the water. This awkward position makes them vulnerable to predators, so they stay alert when drinking.

Giraffes also use their movement for social behavior. During fights, male giraffes engage in a behavior called "necking," where they swing their necks and heads to compete for dominance. This involves precise movement and balance.

Overall, giraffes may not climb or swim, but their unique walking and running abilities help them survive in their natural habitats.