

Name _____



How Does a Hippopotamus Move?

The hippopotamus, or hippo, is a large, semi-aquatic animal that moves in unique ways both in water and on land. Despite its massive size, the hippo is surprisingly fast and efficient when it needs to be. Understanding how a hippo moves can help us appreciate its special adaptations for survival.

On land, hippos do not run like most animals. Instead, they move using a trotting motion. A hippo can reach speeds of up to 20 miles per hour on land, making it faster than many people might expect. They use their short, sturdy legs to support their heavy bodies and can maintain this speed for short distances. Hippos do not climb, as their body size makes it difficult for them to move on steep or uneven surfaces.

In the water, hippos do not swim in the way fish do. Instead, they propel themselves by pushing off the bottom of the river or lake using their powerful legs. They can hold their breath for up to five minutes while moving underwater, which helps them stay safe from predators and stay cool in the heat. Hippos often glide just below the surface, using their buoyant bodies to float.

Hippos also have special techniques for moving between water and land. They often follow the same paths, called hippo trails, which they create by walking repeatedly over the same ground. These trails help other animals find water sources as well.

The ability of hippos to move efficiently both in water and on land makes them well-adapted to their environment. Their speed and strength help them avoid danger and defend themselves if necessary.