

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Is That a Frog or Toad?

By Guy Belleranti



What's the first thing you think of when you see or hear the words frog and toad? Loud "ribbits" or "croaking" calls? Tadpoles swimming in a pond? Long-legged jumpers?



Well, frogs and toads do make loud vocal sounds. And most do begin as tadpoles (though there are a few species that give birth to live young). However, only the true frog is a long-legged jumper. True toads have much shorter back legs that work better for walking or tiny hops.

Toads are actually a type of frog but with some important differences. First, however, let's list some of the other ways frogs and toads are the same:

1. Both are amphibians. They begin their lives in water, hatching from jelly-like eggs into tadpoles. Then, while living in the water the tadpoles go through a series of body changes called metamorphosis. The end result is a frog or toad.
2. Both are ectothermic or "cold-blooded". This doesn't mean their blood is always cold. It means that their body temperatures are similar to their surroundings.
3. Unlike fish and reptiles, neither frogs nor toads have scales. They both have water-tight skin.
4. The adult forms of both animals have no tails. Both begin their lives as tadpoles with tails for swimming, but the tails disappear as they grow into adulthood.
5. Both have long sticky tongues that can flick out fast to catch bugs. They also eat other wiggly and juicy things like worms and slugs. Depending on the size and species they might also eat tiny fish and other small animals. Both usually swallow their food whole. Gulp, gulp.

While both frogs and toads may look similar to the average person, those with animal knowledge and a careful eye for observation can easily spot the differences.

1. Adult toads live mostly on land while frogs go back and forth from land to water.
2. Toads have much dryer and bumpier skin. Frogs usually have a moist, smooth skin that needs water to keep from drying out.
3. Toads usually have plumper bodies than frogs. Frogs tend to be thinner, allowing them to glide quickly through the water.
4. Frogs have webbed feet whereas a toad's foot has separated toes. The frog's webbed feet, along with their longer legs, make them much better swimmers.
5. Frogs usually lay eggs in clusters and toads usually lay eggs in chains.
6. Most species of toads do not have teeth. Frogs have tiny teeth in their upper jaws.
7. Toads have a special parotid gland filled with poison located behind each eye. When an enemy attacks a toad, it protects itself by squirting the poison. While most species of toads are not harmful to humans, they can hurt pets and other small animals. Frogs do not have poison glands behind their eyes, but a few types frogs can ooze a poison onto their skin to keep away predators.

Next time you see a four-legged amphibian swimming through the water or hopping across your back yard, take a closer look to determine if it is a frog or a toad.



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1. Read each sentence below and determine whether it is describing frogs, toads, or both. Write *frogs*, *toads*, or *both* on the line next to each sentence.

\_\_\_\_\_ We do not have scales covering our bodies.

\_\_\_\_\_ We have webbed feet.

\_\_\_\_\_ We have tiny teeth in our mouths.

\_\_\_\_\_ We swallow our food whole.

\_\_\_\_\_ We have bumpy skin.

2. Explain how toads lay their eggs differently than frogs.

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3. Frogs and toads are both cold-blooded. What does *cold-blooded* mean?

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4. How has the author organized information in this article?

- a. He lists information in sequential order.
- b. He lists similarities and difference in order of importance.
- c. He contrasts frogs and toads, then compares them.
- d. He compares frogs and toads, then contrasts them.

**Challenge:** Make up a true/false quiz using information from the article, "Is That a Frog or Toad?". Your quiz should have five questions. Have a friend take your quiz. When he or she is done, correct it and let them know how they did.

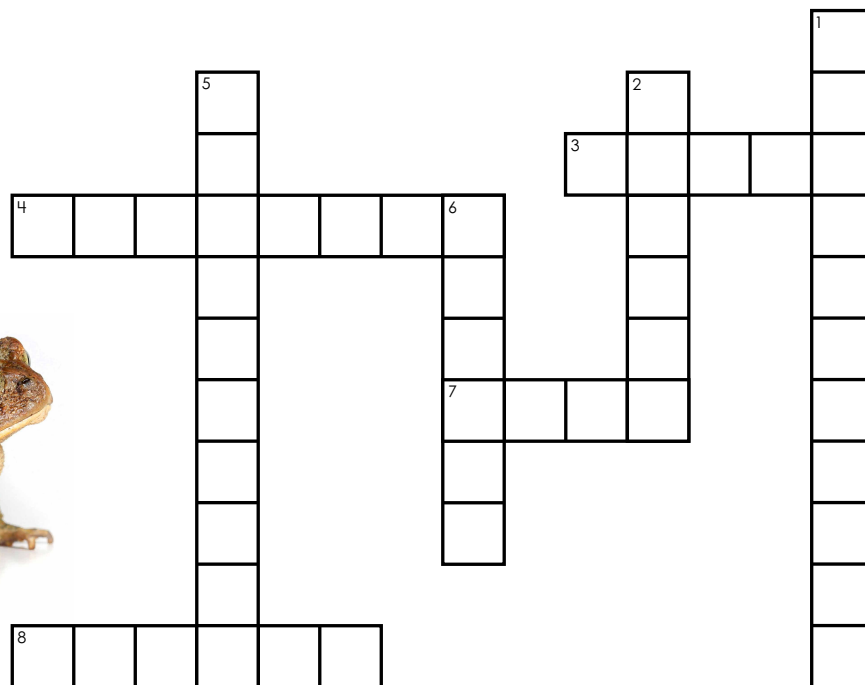
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Use information from the article to help you answer the crossword clues.



## Across

3. Frogs have these on their upper jaws.
4. When they hatch from eggs, frogs and toads begin their lives as...
7. Adult toads spend most of their time on...
8. A toad has this in its parotid gland.

## Down

1. a word meaning cold-blooded
2. type of feet found on a frog
5. vertebrate group to which frogs and toads belong
6. Fish and reptiles have these covering their bodies. (Frogs and toads do not have these on their bodies.)

## ANSWER KEY



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both We do not have scales covering our bodies.

frogs We have webbed feet.

frogs We have tiny teeth in our mouths.

both We swallow our food whole.

toads We have bumpy skin.

2. Explain how toads lay their eggs differently than frogs.

Toads lay eggs in long chains. Frogs lay eggs in clusters.

3. Frogs and toads are both cold-blooded. What does *cold-blooded* mean?

Cold-blooded means their body temperatures are similar to their surroundings.

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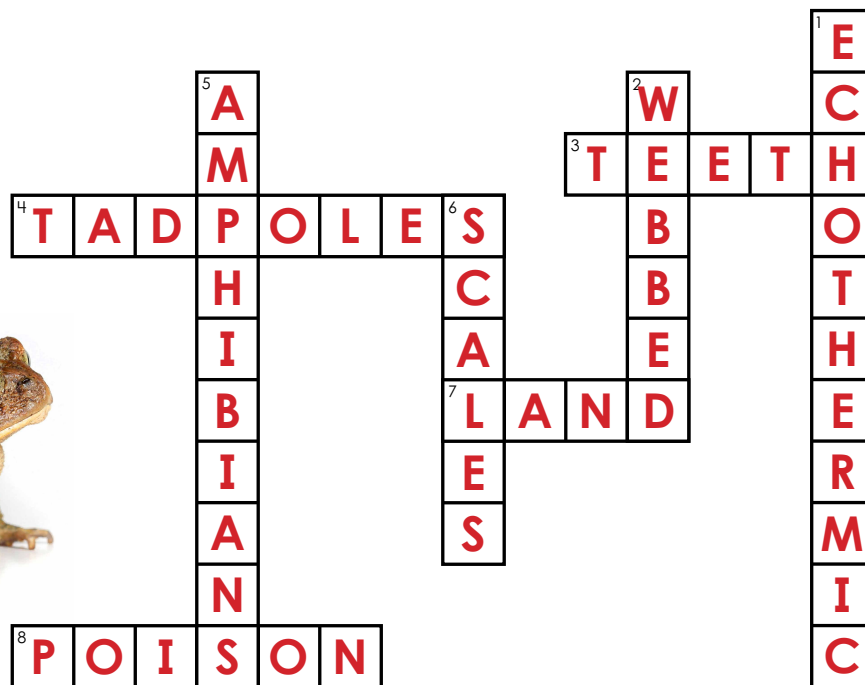
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