

LIFE CYCLES OF ANIMALS

The term life cycle refers to the stages and changes that occur throughout an animal's life. The development of animals from their baby form into their adult form is called metamorphosis. Some baby animals look nothing like the adult animals they will become. For example, baby frogs, known as tadpoles, emerge from their eggs looking very different from adult frogs. Very young tadpoles have gills and no limbs. They look almost like fish. They grow into larger tadpoles with limbs before finally become adult frogs.

Insects go through two different types of metamorphosis – complete and incomplete. In complete metamorphosis, insect eggs hatch and become wormlike larva. They then go through a stage where they are called pupa. During this stage their bodies change a great deal. Some of them spin cocoons where they can stay sheltered from the environment as they grow into adults. In the final stage of complete metamorphosis pupa emerge as winged insects. In incomplete metamorphosis, insects change shape more slowly. Eggs become nymphs, which look like smaller versions of adult insects without wings. Finally, the nymphs grow wings and become adults.

Of course, human beings go through life cycles as well. You do not look the same now as you did when you were a newborn infant, and when you are an adult, you will look different than you do now! Some animals go through more interesting life cycles than others. Butterflies are one example. They start out as larva known as caterpillars that look like fuzzy worms with tiny limbs. After spinning cocoons and developing through the pupa stage, they emerge as beautiful butterflies with wings of various shapes and colors.

While some animals change a great deal as they go through the stages of their life cycle, other animals look basically the same when they are babies as they do when they are adults. If you have ever had a puppy or a kitten and watched it grow into an adult dog or cat, you know that, in many ways, the adults look a lot like they did as babies.

In some cases, the pattern of a baby animal's fur or feathers changes as it grows older. For example, baby lions (cubs) are born with spots that disappear as they get older. As they grow older still, male lions grow manes of fur around their heads. Another example is baby ducks (chicks), which are born with very soft yellow feathers that change into the larger, patterned feathers of adult ducks when they grow older.

Name _____



Date _____

8. Describe two changes that a baby male lion will undergo.

9. A baby duck is called a _____.

10. How do a baby duck's feathers differ from those of an adult duck?

Name _____

Date _____

ANSWERS

1. c
2. metamorphosis
3. tadpole
4. c
5. d
6. c
7. cubs
8. They lose their spots and they grow manes.
9. chick
10. Chicks are born with very soft yellow feathers that change into the larger, patterned feathers of adult ducks when they grow older.