

Salamanders

Salamanders look a lot like lizards. However, unlike lizards, which are reptiles, salamanders are amphibians. Like most amphibians, salamanders are born in the water and spend the first part of their lives there. As adults, many salamanders spend most or all of their time on land. However, some salamanders spend their entire lives in the water. Salamanders are actually more closely related to frogs and toads than they are to lizards. They have smooth, slimy skin and do not have scales or claws. Salamanders always live near water. Since they don't have any covering on their skin, they will dry out if they are not in a moist climate. Many salamanders live in moist soil under logs and rocks where they can be shaded from the sun. They also often live near streams.

There are salamanders as small as an inch or two in length, while the largest salamanders are as much as five feet long. Most salamanders do not grow larger than five inches long. The largest salamanders, which are called giant salamanders, are found in Japan and China. In North America, two types of salamanders – the hellbender salamander and the mudpuppy – can grow to about one foot in length. Salamanders are not dangerous, but sometimes they frighten people who do not know what they are. However, people rarely see salamanders in the wild. This is because they are mostly active at night or on cloudy, rainy days. When the sun is out, they usually hide so their skin will not dry out.

Salamanders are found in the Americas and in some parts of Asia and Europe. They prey on insects, slugs and worms. They also eat frog eggs and tiny shellfish. When salamanders are born, they breathe through gills just like fish. When they become adults, they lose their gills and breathe either through lungs or through their skin. Some species of salamanders do not have lungs at all and breathe only through their skin and the lining of their mouths.

Perhaps you have heard the term newt used to refer to amphibians that appear to be salamanders. That's because newts *are* salamanders. All newts are salamanders, but not all salamanders are newts. Some amphibians called salamanders in one part of the world are called newts in other parts of the world. The term newt usually refers to salamanders that spend all of their adult lives on land. Like most amphibians, salamanders and newts usually breed in the water, even if they basically land dwellers.

Salamanders Questions

1. Salamanders are a type of
 - a. lizard.
 - b. frog.
 - c. amphibian.
 - d. reptile.

2. Salamanders are usually born
 - a. on land.
 - b. in the water.
 - c. under rocks.
 - d. in moist soil.

3. Which is most closely related to a salamander?
 - a. a lizard
 - b. a snake
 - c. a toad
 - d. a fish

4. On sunny days, what do most salamanders do?
 - a. They hide under rocks or logs so their skin won't dry out.
 - b. They climb onto rocks to warm up.
 - c. They go into the water.
 - d. It depends on the type of salamander.

5. The largest salamanders in the world are found in
 - a. North America and Canada.
 - b. Europe.
 - c. Africa.
 - d. China and Japan.

6. Most salamanders are
 - a. more than a foot long.
 - b. less than a foot long.
 - c. poisonous.
 - d. plant eaters.

Salamanders Questions (Cont'd)

7. List five things that salamanders eat.

8. How do adult salamanders breathe?
 - a. They have gills.
 - b. They have lungs.
 - c. They breathe through their skin.
 - d. It depends on the type of salamander.

9. A newt is
 - a. a cross between a lizard and a salamander.
 - b. a type of reptile related to a salamander.
 - c. a salamander.
 - d. a mythological creature.

10. Where do newts live?
 - a. only in the water
 - b. on land almost all of the time
 - c. in cold climates
 - d. There is no such thing as a newt.

Name _____



Date _____

Salamanders Answers

1. c
2. b
3. c
4. a
5. d
6. b
7. insects, slugs, worms, frog eggs, tiny shellfish
8. d
9. c
10. b