

Zebras

Zebras are a type of wild horse. Of course, zebras can easily be recognized by their black and white stripes. Even though they may all look the same at first, every zebra has a different pattern of stripes. Zebras have excellent eyesight and hearing, and they can run up to 35 miles per hour. They also kick with a powerful force that can injure even lions and hyenas, two of the zebra's predators.

Male zebras are called stallions and females are called mares, just like male and female horses. Also like horses, young zebras are known as foals. Most zebras are white with black stripes, but some are black with white stripes. The stripes are actually designed to protect zebras from predators. It is hard for a predator to pick out a single zebra from a group because of all those wild stripes!

Zebras are herbivores that graze on grasses, though they sometimes browse for other vegetation like leaves and stems of bushes. Most zebras are nomads, meaning they move from place to place looking for food and do not stay in one specific area. They are social animals that live in groups of one male, a few females and their young. Zebras will stand in lines and groom each other by nibbling on each other's coats to pull out loose hairs. When they travel, the male (called the lead stallion) stays in the back of the group to protect the females and young zebras from predators. Small family groups of zebras travel with larger groups that can consist of several hundred animals. To communicate with each other, zebras make different sounds. They bark, bray, snort and "whuffle." They also use facial expressions to communicate. The way they hold their ears, how wide they open their eyes, and whether their mouths are open and their teeth are showing all mean different things. For instance, a zebra that has its ears flat and pointing back is probably trying to warn other zebras of trouble.

A zebra's lifespan is about 25 years in the wild. Baby zebras are born brown and white and the brown areas turn black as they get older. A baby zebra can stand and walk only twenty minutes after it is born! It only takes an hour for them to learn how to run, because it is very important for family groups to stay together. A baby must keep up with its mother right away as the herd travels from place to place looking for food and water.

Zebras Questions

1. Which statement is true?
 - a. In each family of zebras, all of the members of that family have the same pattern of stripes.
 - b. There are less than 100 different patterns of zebra stripes.
 - c. Every zebra has a different pattern of stripes.
 - d. The pattern of a zebra's stripes depends on the particular species.

2. Which statement is true?
 - a. Zebras have excellent eyesight and excellent hearing.
 - b. Zebras have poor eyesight and excellent hearing.
 - c. Zebras have poor eyesight and poor hearing.
 - d. Zebras have excellent eyesight and poor hearing.

3. Zebras protect themselves from predators like lions and hyenas by
 - a. spitting at them.
 - b. kicking them.
 - c. biting them.
 - d. charging them in groups.

4. Zebras' stripes protect them from predators by
 - a. making the predators think the zebras will not taste good.
 - b. making the predators dizzy.
 - c. making it hard for predators to pick out a single zebra from a group.
 - d. making it easy for zebras to blend into the branches and trees in the jungle.

5. Zebras eat
 - a. grass.
 - b. leaves.
 - c. stems.
 - d. All of these

Zebras Questions (Cont'd)

6. As nomads, zebras
 - a. stay in the same group for their entire lives.
 - b. sleep standing up.
 - c. move from place to place looking for food.
 - d. move from place to place seeking the best shelter.

7. The leader of a zebra “family” is called the
 - a. lead horse.
 - b. lead stallion.
 - c. father.
 - d. alpha male.

8. Zebras communicate by
 - a. making sounds.
 - b. the way they look at each other.
 - c. the way they position their ears.
 - d. All of these

9. A zebra might warn other zebras of trouble by
 - a. kicking its legs out.
 - b. making a “whuffling” sound.
 - c. holding its ears flat and pointing back.
 - d. showing its teeth.

10. Baby zebras
 - a. can walk and run within 20 minutes of being born.
 - b. can walk and run within an hour of being born.
 - c. are left behind with their mothers while their fathers search for food.
 - d. do not have stripes at first.

Name _____



Date _____

Zebras Answers

1. c
2. a
3. b
4. c
5. d
6. c
7. b
8. d
9. c
10. b