

Why Do Frogs Hop?

One hot day before frogs could hop, Frog took a walk to sit in the shade of a tree next to the pond. He was hoping to catch a delicious dragonfly for his lunch, so he sat very still. He was so still that Snake nearly didn't see him. He was about to slither by when he heard Frog's growling stomach.

Snake thought Frog looked tasty. This thought made Snake's stomach rumble loudly! Frog heard the sound and quickly turned around. "I'm only very small. I won't fill you up, Snake," Frog croaked.

Snake thought about this, and his stomach growled again. Frog was very small, but Snake was very hungry. Clever Frog knew that Snake liked to race because he could swim very fast. "Race me across the pond," Frog suggested. "You can eat me if you win. If I win, you let me go."

Snake immediately agreed. He knew that it would take Frog much longer to swim across or walk around because he was so small. "This is too easy," he thought. "Three, two, one, go."

Frog knew he couldn't swim as fast as Snake and it would take even longer to walk around the pond, but he needed to win. He could see some large leaves floating on the pond. If he could get from one leaf to the next, he might just make it across the pond faster than Snake.

The only way was to hop. He had never hopped before, but perhaps his long back legs would help him make a giant leap. Hop! He made it to the first leaf! Hop, hop, hop, Frog jumped from one leaf to the next. He landed on the other side of the pond just a second before Snake slithered out of the water. Snake was angry to have been beaten by a small frog.

Frog hopped joyfully back across the leaves to return to the other side of the pond.



Ranna and the Frogs

Long, long ago, deep in Africa, a boy named Ranna lived by himself in a secret, magical cave. On the outside, the cave was dull, rocky, and gray. But inside, the walls of the cave were covered with glittering jewels—rubies, diamonds, and sapphires. Ranna shared his cave with three pet frogs.

They were named Drab, Ash, and Grey, and their skin was a dull gray-green. Drab was tiny. Ash was tinier, and little Grey was tiniest of all. One day Ranna was playing a hunting game with his frog friends. He accidentally knocked over one of the torches that lit up the cave. The torch fell onto the dried grass Ranna used for a bed and set it on fire!

Ranna was terrified! “Help!” he screamed. He knew he had to find a way out! He ran for the entrance, but it was in flames. He reached down to pick up Drab, Ash, and Grey. But his little friends hopped away from him. He followed them, but they just hopped more quickly, deeper and deeper into the cave.

“How strange; it seems to be getting cooler,” Ranna thought. Then he saw a giant crack in the cave wall! Ranna scooped up the three frogs and wriggled through. First, Ranna took a deep breath of fresh air. Then he bent down to see if Drab, Ash, and Grey were all right.

Ranna was amazed! Drab, Ash, and Grey were safe, but they were not dull and green anymore! Drab was ruby red with flecks of gold. Ash was a bright sapphire blue with streaks of black. Grey looked like a shimmering rainbow! The walls of the cave had melted and coated the frogs in brilliant colors.

“Now, no one will ever forget your bravery!” said Ranna. And to this day, the children and grandchildren of those three little frogs have beautiful skin, the color of gems.



How Toad Got His Bumpy Skin

Many moons ago, two families met up at the local watering hole to relax with one another. The frog family hopped about, leaping from the murky brown water onto lily pads and then back in. After a few hours of fun, the mother frog called for her children to come out of the water to eat some of the flies that were buzzing around. The frog children hopped out onto the shore and spent the next hour snatching flies out of the air with their long sticky tongues.

The other family, the toads, loved the cool waters of the watering hole far more than the frog family. The toad children never leapt onto lily pads. They never hopped onto the shore. They loved the feeling of the cool waters on their smooth and slippery skin. The toad children spent the whole afternoon lounging beneath the muddy waters. When the toad mother called for her children to come out to eat, her children paid no attention. She croaked and ribbited while the frog family ate their flies but never saw her children surface for more than a moment.

At last, the sun began to set. The frog family packed their things and hopped back to their froggy den. The toad mother had to jump into the watering hole and fish her children out one by one. Now, with the sun fully set and the moon shining brightly in the sky, mother toad looked upon her kids as she gathered their things. Her once smooth and shiny children had become bumpy and wrinkled from all the time they spent under the water. "We're sorry mother," they croaked, "We won't stay in the water ever again!"

Even though the young toads have kept their promise, their skin remains wrinkled and bumpy to this day.



Why the Frog Has a Long Tongue

Long, long ago in a sparkling, blue mountain lake, there lived a young frog named Kikker. Kikker had smooth, lime green skin. His big, black eyes were rimmed in gold and bulged pleasantly. When Kikker was happy, his eyes closed into two straight solid-gold lines, one on each side of his head. Kikker was very smart and very kind and very, very tiny. In fact, he was no bigger than your thumbnail!

Now every year, the frogs in Kikker's lake held a big fly-catching contest. Whoever caught the most flies won. Kikker loved to watch the long-legged frogs in his lake practicing for the contest. They leapt high in the air, opened their big, wide mouths and then quickly snapped them shut, trapping a delicious fly inside!

Kikker was excited because this year, he was finally old enough to enter. Oh, how he wanted to win that contest! "I need to practice," thought Kikker. Just then, a small fly buzzed by. Kikker hopped into the air as high as he could. He opened his not-so-big mouth and then snapped it shut. But instead of tasting a delicious fly, Kikker heard loud croaks of laughter.

"Why don't you get some stilts, Tiny?"

"Do you need a ladder?"

"Look at those puny legs!"

Kikker dove deep under the water, embarrassed. All day long, he tried unsuccessfully to jump up and catch flies. "What can I do?" Kikker thought. "My little legs will never be able to hop as high as those bigger frogs." All day long, Kikker tried to jump up and catch flies, but he didn't catch a single one. He felt terribly sad. His legs were sore, and his mouth was parched from snapping open and shut.

He reached his long tongue into the lake for a cool drink. Just then Kikker had an idea—a very clever idea! He slowly swam over to a quiet part of the lake, still thinking about his wonderful idea. He knew now what he had to practice. And practice he did, day after day, working his muscles until he was strong and skilled.

Finally the day of the contest arrived. Long-legged frogs hopped everywhere, leaping and turning high in the air, opening their huge mouths and snapping them shut. It seemed like each frog jumped higher than the last. The geese kept count of how many flies each frog caught. Who would catch the most?

Over in a quiet corner of the lake sat Kikker, barely moving, every muscle still. "Decided not to even try, Kikker? Don't blame you—you don't stand a chance!" croaked Old Bullfrog with a wide smirk on his face. Just then, Kikker's long, strong tongue shot out of his mouth, wrapped around a startled fly, and pulled it inside. Kikker did this again and again, catching more flies than all the other frogs combined, all the while barely moving a muscle!

Of course, Kikker won the contest, setting the record for the most flies caught—ever! "Hey, Kikker," called a long-legged frog from across the lake, "that looks much easier than what we're doing. Could you teach the rest of us how to do that?"

So Kikker, who never held a grudge, showed the other frogs how to do the curling and rolling exercises he had used to make his tongue long, strong, and flexible. Soon all the frogs in the lake were relaxing, catching flies almost effortlessly, with just a flick of the tongue. In the far corner of the lake, Kikker sat proudly, his eyes shut in two solid-gold lines on each side of his head, a big grin on his face.

Glossary:

bulge: to stick out

smirk: a mean smile

"hold a grudge": to feel angry at someone because of something they have done