FAQs: Frogs

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

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- What kind of lighting do I need to use?
- What temperature should I keep my frog's habitat at?
- Can I keep two frogs together?
- Can I hold my frog?

Why are frogs slimy?

Some frogs secrete mucous to keep their skin moist. They don't drink water, so they have to absorb the moisture they need through their skin. Their moist skin also provides them with additional oxygen, as they absorb the oxygen that is present in water. If their skin dries out, they can suffocate.

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What is the difference between a frog and a toad?

Toads are actually a type of frog, so all toads are in fact frogs. However, frogs have moist skin and must live in or near water, while toads have drier skin that enables them to live further from water. Frogs also have longer hind legs that are adept at leaping long distances, while toads tend to have shorter, stubbier legs that allow them to crawl or hop short distances.

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How long do frogs live?

This varies widely by species. The average life span of a frog in captivity is four to five years, but many frogs can live fifteen years or more. Research a species' life span before purchasing it so you know whether or not you will be able to provide a home for his entire life.

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How big do frogs get?

This again depends on the species of the frog. Some frogs, such as the African Dwarf Frog with an adult size of only 1-1/2", will remain small their entire lives, while others, such as the inaccurately named Pixie Frog, will start small but grow to be very large as adults. The Pixie Frog is actually very fat and 8" to 9" long as an adult! (Its common name is derived from its Latin name, not its appearance.) How big a frog gets is something you will want to consider when choosing which species you want to keep as a pet.

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Which frogs are good for new herp enthusiasts?

If you are considering getting your first frog, you want to choose one that is relatively easy to care for. Frogs that do well at room temperature or that have an easy set up work well for beginners. Some good beginner frogs include:

Terrestrial:	White's Tree Frogs, Pacman Frogs, American Green Tree Frogs
Aquatic:	African Clawed Frogs, African Dwarf Frogs
Semi-terrestrial:	Northern Leopard Frog

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Do frogs hibernate?

Some frogs, such as Leopard Frogs, do, while others don't. If your frog hibernates, you will have to create a separate enclosure for hibernation or make adjustments to the regular enclosure to mimic his natural environment during colder months. Speak with your veterinarian about proper hibernation care for your frog.

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What do frogs eat?

Frogs are carnivores, and most live on a diet consisting mainly of feeder insects such as live crickets and mealworms. Aquatic frogs will eat items such as brine shrimp, bloodworms, and krill in addition to chopped up earthworms or night crawlers, and some large terrestrial frogs will eat the occasional pinkie mouse. Most frogs prefer food that moves, though some aquatic frogs will eat commercial frog diets.

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What kind of habitat does my frog need?

That depends entirely on what species of frog you are keeping. There are four main types of frog habitat. They are:

- Terrestrial - for frogs that need a drier environment with only a small bowl of water
- Aquatic - for frogs that need a fully aquatic setup with no land area
- Semi-terrestrial - for frogs that need a half land, half water enclosure
- Arboreal - for tree frogs or very active frogs that need a tall enclosure to allow room for jumping and climbing

The most common setup is the semi-terrestrial habitat, and it is also the most difficult to set up properly. Research your frog's needs to determine which type of habitat he needs and whether or not you will be able to properly set it up.

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How big should my frog's habitat be?

This will depend on how many frogs you are keeping in one enclosure and what species they are. If you are keeping one small frog, usually anywhere from a one gallon to a 10 gallon terrarium or aquarium will do. If the species you are keeping is larger or more active or you are keeping more than one frog, the minimum enclosure size will be 20 gallons.

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Do I need to put a lid on my frog's habitat?

Definitely! All frogs, even those that are aquatic, can easily jump out of an enclosure without a lid. Many frogs are adept at climbing slick surfaces like glass, and they could climb right out of the habitat. We recommend the use of a tight-fitting wire mesh lid , as it will prevent escape while still providing proper ventilation.

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What accessories should I put in the habitat?

This will depend on what kind of setup you are using. In a terrestrial, semi-terrestrial, or arboreal habitat, some common habitat accessories include driftwood, branches, cork bark, or vines for perches; plants or hollow logs for hiding spots; and a water bowl or water area for soaking. In an aquatic habitat, the only required accessories are hiding places, and they can be created with plants, PVC pipes, aquarium decorations, rocks,

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driftwood, and any other item that your frog can hide in, behind, or under.
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What kind of substrate should I use?

This depends on what kind of frog you are keeping. In an aquatic setup, it's often easier to not use substrate, as it will help to keep the tank cleaner. If you do use it, aquarium gravel will work. In non-aquatic setups, you will need to use something that will help to retain moisture, such as mulch, Repti Bark, coconut fiber, or a combination of soil and moss . Gravel can be used in the water area of semi-terrestrial setups. In aquatic or non-aquatic setups, any gravel that you use must be large enough that your frog cannot ingest it.
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Can I use tap water for my frog's habitat?

Absolutely not! Frogs are very sensitive to chemicals and contaminants in water. Any water you use must be de-chlorinated. You can do this by allowing tap water to sit out for 24 hours or using a water conditioner before putting it in the habitat. Failing to do either of these things can kill your frogs.
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What humidity level should I maintain in my frog's habitat?

Most frogs will require a very high humidity level in their habitat, usually 60% or higher. This is because their skin needs to stay moist. For aquatic frogs, humidity isn't a concern because they will spend all or most of their lives in water. For terrestrial species, however, you will need to make sure to maintain the proper humidity levels. You can do this by using substrate that retains moisture, misting the habitat at least once a day, and using products designed to increase humidity, such as the Exo Terra Waterfall. Always monitor humidity levels with a hygrometer, and speak to your veterinarian about what the proper humidity is for your frog.
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What kind of lighting do I need to use?

This will vary by species. Some frogs are nocturnal, while others are diurnal or crepuscular. Those frogs that are diurnal require UV light during the day, while nocturnal frogs generally do not, though it may be beneficial to provide low levels of UVB light. All frogs require a natural cycle of 12 hours of light followed by 12 hours of darkness. For nocturnal frogs, you can use a special nocturnal bulb to view their nighttime activities without disturbing them. With some frogs, you should avoid using incandescent bulbs, as those types of bulbs can dry out their skin; fluorescent bulbs would be preferable in these habitats. Research your species to determine which type of lighting will be necessary or preferred.
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What temperature should I keep my frog's habitat at?

The preferred optimum temperature range (POTR) for frogs usually falls somewhere between room temperature and 80°F. A basking area with temperatures between 85° and 88°F is needed for some species. For others, this high temperature may create serious problems. You may need to use products such as heat lamps, under tank heaters, or submersible aquarium heaters to maintain proper temperature, and you should always monitor temperature with a thermometer. Speak to your veterinarian or research the species to determine what temperature range will be necessary for your frog, and if a basking area is necessary.
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Can I keep two frogs together?

We recommend housing multiple frogs together only if they are the same species and similarly sized. Frogs of different species can often be toxic to each other, and one

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may attempt to eat the other. Frogs of the same species generally get along well, and some frogs, such as African Dwarf Frogs, actually seem to prefer to live in groups. However, only house those that are approximately the same size, or the larger frogs may try to eat the small frogs. Additionally, remember that housing multiple frogs in one terrarium or aquarium means that the enclosure will have to be larger, and you will need to provide more hiding places.
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Can I hold my frog?

Frogs are pets that are meant to be observed, not held. We recommend handling your frog only when it is necessary, such as when you have to move him to another enclosure so you can clean his habitat. Many frogs have toxins in their skin that can irritate our skin, and they are also very sensitive to salt and other things on our skin. If you must handle your frogs, wear gloves or wash your hands thoroughly before and after touching them.
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