

Marvelous Mammals

Being mammals, we humans should have a special interest in this group. There are many characteristics that we share with other mammals. Mammals are named for the presence of **mammary glands** which mothers use to produce milk and nourish their young. Another characteristic of mammals is hair. Like the feathers of birds or the scales of reptiles, hair is made of **keratin**.

Mammals are **endothermic**, meaning they use their own metabolism to keep their bodies at a constant, warm temperature. Mammals have efficient, four-chambered hearts to circulate blood and diaphragms to ventilate their lungs.

With few exceptions, mammals are born rather than hatched. Mammals also have large brains relative to other vertebrates. Many mammals are capable learners and spend considerable time with their offspring, teaching them survival skills. Mammals also have different sizes and shapes of teeth to do different jobs. For example, we have incisors which are used for shearing and molars which are used for grinding.

Mammals are divided into three major groups:

- **monotremes** (egg-laying mammals)
- **marsupials** (mammals with pouches)
- **eutherian** (placental) mammals.

Platypuses and echidnas are monotremes—the only living mammals that lay eggs. These animals are found only in Australia and New Guinea. After the babies hatch, they are fed milk directly from the fur of their mother.

Marsupials are animals like opossums, koalas, and kangaroos. Marsupials are born while still very early in their development, so they complete embryonic development while nursing. The nursing young are held in a pouch. Kangaroo babies are born just over a month after fertilization when they are only the size of a honeybee. Other marsupials are wombats and Tasmanian devils.

The category Eutherian or **placental** mammals includes humans. Placental mammals have a longer period of pregnancy. The young complete their development inside the uterus, connected to their mother by the placenta. Placental mammals are found on land and in the sea. Whales, dolphins, porpoises, and manatees are examples of mammals that live in the water.

Name _____

Date _____

Marvelous Mammals

Questions

1. True or False: Mammals are named for mammary glands which are used to nourish young with milk.
2. True or False: Mammals have hair.
3. Mammals have specialized _____ in different shapes and sizes such as incisors and molars.
4. The _____ are the egg-laying mammals.
5. Although they hatch from eggs, platypus babies drink milk from their mother's _____.
 - a. toe
 - b. hair
 - c. mammary glands
 - d. tail
6. Marsupials are mammals that keep their young in _____ after they are born very early in embryonic development.
 - a. pouches
 - b. cages
 - c. backpacks
 - d. cocoons
7. Give an example of a marsupial.
8. Eutherian or _____ mammals give birth to young that have already gone through embryonic development in the womb.
9. Developing eutherian mammals get nourishment from the
 - a. placenta
 - b. pouch
 - c. egg
 - d. none of the above
10. Give an example of a eutherian mammal that lives in the water.

Name _____

Date _____

Marvelous Mammals

Answer Key

1. **True** or False: Mammals are named for mammary glands which are used to nourish young with milk.
2. **True** or False: Mammals have hair.
3. Mammals have specialized **teeth** in different shapes and sizes such as incisors and molars.
4. The **monotremes** are the egg-laying mammals.
5. Although they hatch from eggs, platypus babies drink milk from their mother's _____.
 - a. toe
 - b. hair**
 - c. mammary glands
 - d. tail
6. Marsupials are mammals that keep their young in _____ after they are born very early in embryonic development.
 - a. pouches**
 - b. cages
 - c. backpacks
 - d. cocoons
7. Give an example of a marsupial. **Koala, kangaroo, opossums.**
8. Eutherian or **placental** mammals give birth to young that have already gone through embryonic development in the womb.
9. Developing eutherian mammals get nourishment from the
 - a. placenta**
 - b. pouch
 - c. egg
 - d. none of the above
10. Give an example of a eutherian mammal that lives in the water. **Whale, dolphin, porpoise, manatee.**