

Kangaroo Adaptations: Lesson for Kids

Cite this lesson 

You probably already know that kangaroos hop, but did you know that they do so for a purpose? Come and learn about this and many other adaptations in this lesson.

Hopping

In which scenario do you think you would be less tired: 15 minutes spent sprinting down the street or 15 minutes spent bouncing on a trampoline? It's so much easier on your body to bounce on a trampoline - plus much more fun, right? Well, this is some insight in to what it's like to be a kangaroo. Their main mode of transportation is jumping, also known as **saltatory locomotion**. Kangaroos are able to travel long distances quickly without using very much energy.

Body Parts

If you tried to hop as a way to get around, you would likely tire out quickly. Kangaroos don't have this problem because of their enormous back feet that are built for jumping. Another adaptation that helps kangaroos with hopping is their long, thick, muscular tail that aids with balance. Kangaroos have many other body parts that have helped them to adapt to their environment. For example, their ears have the ability to rotate, which allows them to find a predator before they are able see them. They also have five digits on their front limbs, which allows them to clutch objects.



A kangaroo hopping



A kangaroo tail helps it stay balanced

predator, they will begin thumping. This is also a sign for the joeys to hop back inside their mother's pouch. Can you imagine if every time you felt afraid, you had a pouch that you were able to hide inside? That would be pretty cool!

No Water? No Problem!

Air, food, shelter, and water. These are the four basic things that living things need to survive. While kangaroos do need water, they don't need much of it. This is an adaptation that kangaroos have developed since they typically live in desert and semi-desert environments. A

Defense

Don't mess with a kangaroo's baby! Like many animals, one of the biggest maternal instincts is to protect her young. A mother kangaroo is adapted to do just that. Female kangaroos have a special pouch in front. Think of it like a built in stroller! The baby kangaroo, or **joey**, lives inside the pouch until it's grown. Not only is the joey protected from predators, it is also able to get the nourishment it needs, as the mother is able to feed and nurse the joey inside the pouch.

Another way that kangaroos will protect themselves from potential threats is by stamping their feet. If they see a

kangaroo's digestive tract can reabsorb water from the food it eats. This is because a kangaroo's digestive system moves so slowly that it absorbs almost every, single drop of water from its food before it passes through. As a result, they can go a very long time without water, sometimes months at a time!

Since kangaroos don't drink much water, they do other things in order to stay cool. For one thing, they are **crepuscular** creatures meaning they stay out during dawn and dusk. These are times when it's not sunny and the temperature is cooler. Kangaroos will also do things like lick the inside of their arms and chests to stay cool.



Look at the baby joey in the pouch!

Lesson Summary

Kangaroos get around by jumping, also known as **saltatory locomotion**. Females have pouches that are used to protect the baby **joey**s. Kangaroos are **crepuscular** so that they can stay cool.