

# Natural Illinois: Frogs and Toads



You don't have to go to exotic places to find interesting plants and animals to study at home or in the classroom! Illinois wildlife is as close as your local park or schoolyard. If you look closely at a pond or damp spot under a bush or tree or listen for their calls, you are likely to find a frog or toad.

## Collect classroom resources.

- Ask a librarian to help you find children's nonfiction books and nature magazines with colorful illustrations.
- Display a poster of frogs and toads in your classroom. Place laminated pictures of frogs and toads in the science center.

## Observe a frog or toad.

- Consider observing frogs or toads outdoors, at a pet store, or in a zoo or nature center, or find a high-quality video of frogs online. The laws related to keeping wild animals and releasing them into the wild, plus meeting the animals' needs, can make it complicated to have a live tadpole, frog, or toad in the classroom.
- Ask the children, "Can you find a tail or neck? How many legs does it have? How would you describe the colors on the frog's body?"
- Help the children to discover that most frogs have smooth or slimy skin, long hind legs, webbed hind feet, and bulging eyes. Many toads have bumpy dry skin and stubby bodies.
- Encourage the children to sketch a frog or toad they observe. Try to provide several opportunities for drawing and sketching. Each time, help the children focus on a specific characteristic of the frog.

## Discuss the life cycle of a frog.

- Ask the children what they know about tadpoles.
- Use a book illustration or the drawings on a frog poster to show the stages of development.
- Introduce the word *metamorphosis*. You might ask, "What changes do you see when a tadpole becomes a frog?"
- Help the children make a mural showing the sequence of the changes they observe.

## Listen to different frog and toad calls.

- If your classroom has access to a computer or tablet, search online for frog calls.
- Listen together and ask the children, "Have you heard any of these calls near where you live?"

## Encourage children to use books or the Internet for further research.

- Introduce the term *amphibian*.
- Help them find answers to questions such as, "What do frogs and toads eat? Where do they go during the winter? Why is it sometimes hard to see a frog outside?"
- Help the children share this information by making a wall chart or a book.

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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