

Name: _____

Fish with a Stinging Tail

by Guy Belleranti

There's no doubt about it—the ocean has some pretty unusual creatures! One of them is the stingray. With a body as flat as a pancake and two large fins extending off its head and body, a stingray has an ideal shape for burying itself in the sandy ocean bottom or gliding through the open ocean. Its gray-brown color helps it to blend in with sand and mud. A stingray's unusual body helps it to hide from predators while it quietly waits for prey.



Just like its shark relatives, the stingray has electro-receptors on its head. These receptors help it detect electric fields produced by other animals. Using these receptors and its excellent sense of smell and touch, the stingray knows when prey or predator is close.

A stingray's prey includes bottom-dwelling animals like crabs, clams, oysters, and snails. A stingray also eats small fish and squid. Some stingrays use their specialized jaws to crush shellfish. Others use suction to scoop prey into their mouth.

Predators include sharks. If a shark or other predator attacks, a stingray defends itself with its famous tail. This tail is armed with one or more jagged, venomous spines.

Like a shark, a stingray has no bones. Instead, its skeleton is made of tough, flexible material called cartilage. The stingray propels its flexible body through the sea in either one of two ways. One is by moving its body in a wavy motion. The other is by flapping its side fins and “flying” through the water. As it swims, it looks kind of like a bat in slow motion. Because of this, the stingray is included with other rays in a group of fish called batoids.

Of course, sometimes the stingray isn't swimming. So if you ever go wading in shallow ocean waters, push the sand with your feet as you walk. This way you'll scare away a buried stingray instead of stepping on it.

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1. Which physical features help a stingray sense when predators or prey are close?
- a. electro-receptors
 - b. sense of smell
 - c. sense of touch
 - d. a, b, and c

2. How is a stingray's skeleton similar to a shark's skeleton?

3. Why are stingrays categorized with a group of fish called batoids?

4. Tell whether each sentence from the article is a fact or opinion. Write **F** or **O** on each line.

_____ A stingray's gray-brown color helps it blend in with sand and mud.

_____ The ocean has some pretty unusual creatures!

_____ A stingray's tail is armed with one or more jagged, venomous spikes.

_____ A stingray has a flexible body.

5. How can you avoid stepping on a stingray when you are wading in shallow water?

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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. ___ a ___ o i d ___ _____

hint: a group of flat-bodied fish with a skeleton made of cartilage

2. p ___ e ___ a ___ ___ r _____

hint: an animal that hunts and eats other animals

3. ___ a ___ ___ n g _____

hint: walking through water

4. ___ a r ___ ___ l a ___ e _____

hint: tough, flexible tissue that takes the place of bones in some sea creatures, like stingrays

5. ___ e ___ ___ m ___ ___ s _____

hint: poisonous

6. ___ ___ o p ___ l s _____

hint: pushes or moves forward

7. ___ l e ___ i b ___ e _____

hint: able to bend easily

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In the article, "Fish with a Stinging Tail," you learned many facts about stingrays.



On the lines below, write a paragraph describing why a stingray's unusual body is ideal for its environment. Base your answer on the information you learned in the article.

ANSWER KEY

Fish with a Stinging Tail

by Guy Belleranti



1. Which physical features help a stingray sense when predators or prey are close? **d**

- a. electro-receptors
- b. sense of smell
- c. sense of touch
- d. a, b, and c

2. How is a stingray's skeleton similar to a shark's skeleton?

A stingray's skeleton is made up of cartilage instead of bones, just like a shark.

3. Why are stingrays categorized with a group of fish called batoids?

Stingrays appear to fly through the water with bat-like wings, which is how they get their name.

4. Tell whether each sentence from the article is a fact or opinion. Write **F** or **O** on each line.

F A stingray's gray-brown color helps it blend in with sand and mud.

O The ocean has some pretty unusual creatures!

F A stingray's tail is armed with one or more jagged, venomous spikes.

F A stingray has a flexible body.

5. How can you avoid stepping on a stingray when you are wading in shallow water?

You can push the sand with your feet as you walk to scare off any stingrays hidden in the sand.

ANSWER KEY

Fish with a Stinging Tail

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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. b a t o i d s

hint: a group of flat-bodied fish with a skeleton made of cartilage

batoids

2. p r e d a t o r

hint: an animal that hunts and eats other animals

predator

3. w a d i n g

hint: walking through water

wading

4. c a r t i l a g e

hint: tough, flexible tissue that takes the place of bones in some sea creatures, like stingrays

cartilage

5. v e n o m o u s

hint: poisonous

venomous

6. p r o p e l s

hint: pushes or moves forward

propels

7. f l e x i b l e

hint: able to bend easily

flexible