

Difference between amphibians and reptiles: Amphibians have porous skin and live in land and water, for example frogs and salamanders. A reptile would be a snake or lizard. Something that lives only on land.

Before you bring the pet home:

REPTILES

- Emotional Bonding
 - The first indication of whether or not you and/or your family are ready for a reptile can be easily determined by first impressions. If holding a lizard or having a snake draped around your neck conjures up an emotional response of, “I love him!” rather than, “Yuck, get this thing off of me!” then you’re probably a good candidate for a reptile. Just know that your reptile may not reciprocate that love. Unlike dogs and cats, reptiles generally exhibit little — if any — emotional bonding behaviors. Reptiles are cold-blooded animals, and while they are capable of becoming friendly and recognizing your voice and smell, their life is one of instinct. All they’re looking to do is eat, mate, sleep, and eventually die. On the other hand, reptiles don’t shed hair, rarely pose an allergic threat, and they exercise themselves right inside their cages, so if you want to be a little more hands-off and don’t need to be greeted at the door by your pet, a reptile might be right for you.
- Proper Care
 - One of the things that makes reptiles so popular is that they’re generally easy to care for. Housing a reptile is fairly simple, as well. Some Iguana owners have let their pets live openly, simply supplying them with a wooden tray containing a water dish, heat lamp and a dish for the pet to, hopefully, do it’s business in. However, most reptile owners utilize glass, screen-topped aquariums for terrariums. Ask the pet store for an estimate on how large your new reptile may grow to determine what size tank will be required. Bottom line, reptiles need housing that provides them with emotional and physical comfort. Emotional comfort means that the animal feels safe. Physical comfort means that the cage’s temperature and, to a lesser extent, humidity, are within the same range as your reptile’s origin. Also, it’s a good idea to quarantine the new family member before introducing them to any other others reptiles you may own, to make sure they don’t introduce any illnesses to the others, and to allow them to settle into their new home.
- Feeding Habits
 - Since there is such a wide range of reptiles to choose from, diets may differ slightly depending on which animal you choose. Still, the main staple for most reptiles will be insects and rodents. Ask your pet supplier if your reptile should eat plants, insects, or rodents before you bring your new pet home. Some reptiles,

like tortoises, love fruits and plants, while others, such as snakes, will find a live mouse most delicious. And if watching the circle of life in action isn't your cup of tea, you can even purchase frozen rodents for your reptiles — just be sure to thaw them in warm water before feeding. Keep in mind, however, as reptiles grow larger, so do their appetites. It's not uncommon to feed a full-grown python an entire rabbit as a meal. Iguanas are strictly herbivores, eating the leaves, berries, and fruits they find in the trees they climb. For plant-eating reptiles such as these, a bunch of leafy greens, fruits and/or vegetables from the refrigerator will suffice. Most lizards are insect eaters, and will thrive on a regular diet of crickets and mealworms. Again, before you bring your new pet home, get a clear understanding of what the animal will eat, where you can obtain it, and the best ways to store the food.

AMPHIBIANS

- Your Frog's Diet
 - Crickets have long been a staple of frog keepers, but lack the nutrition necessary for appropriate growth and health. If you feed your pet crickets a few times per week, they should be 'dusted' with a vitamin/mineral supplement before giving them to your frog or toad.
 - Kristin Claricoates, DVM at Chicago Exotics Animal Hospital, says frogs and toads are meat eaters, with the best meals taking the form of fruit flies and other insects to large mice (depending on the frog species). Either way, frogs depend upon high-quality protein from animal-based fatty acids and minimal carbohydrates. Research your particular species or consult care guidelines from reputable pet stores for the diet specific to your frog.
 - Erica Mede, president and founder of Friends of Scales Reptile Rescue agrees, recommending a mix of earthworms (cut to size as needed), crickets, dubia roaches and soft body prey items, such as silk worms and horn worms. She notes that different species will need different food items, stressing the importance of researching your specific frog species to determine what it will eat. For example, adult South American horned frogs (commonly called Pac-Man frogs because of their large mouth, rounded body and large appetite) can consume a small rodent occasionally—but a rodent may not be appropriate for a different type of frog.
- Your Frog's Environment
 - Researching your species will be crucial in determining the appropriate temperature, humidity, and bedding in your frog's habitat, said Fabretti. Some habitat considerations for a few popular species of pet frogs, according to Claricoates, are as follows:

- Horned frog: these terrestrial frogs should be housed alone due to a tendency toward cannibalism. These are very large frogs, reaching up to eight inches long, but are sedentary so don't need a lot of room to roam. Generally, they require at least a 10 to 15-gallon aquarium or container. The ideal temperature for these frogs is between 77 and 82 degrees Fahrenheit, but can drop to 72 degrees Fahrenheit at night, with humidity maintained around 60 to 80 percent. They should have a large bowl of water they can soak in.
 - Bullfrog: require a minimum enclosure of 20 gallons, with an additional five-gallon space in the aquarium per additional animal. This ensures there is enough room and hiding spots to prevent territorial aggression. The ideal temperature should range between 77 and 84 degrees Fahrenheit. They should have a floating log or platform on which they can climb to get out of the water.
 - Fire bellied toads: these toads can be housed alone or in a small group of same-size toads. They require a 10 to 15-gallon aquarium or container, which is adequate for two or three toads. The ideal temperature is 75 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit but can drop to 72 degrees Fahrenheit at night. The humidity in the enclosure should be 50 to 70 percent.
 - White's tree frog: because they are climbers, these frogs require a high, 15 to 20-gallon aquarium for one adult frog. Larger enclosures are needed for additional frogs (shouldn't exceed five adults). The enclosure temperature should range from 76 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit, with a basking area—an area of elevated temperature in your pet's enclosure—that does not exceed 90 degrees. They require a bowl of water large enough that they can soak in it.
- Frog Health Issues
 - Before bringing your frog home, Cinthia Fabretti, DVM, of Animalis Veterinary recommends getting a check-up at a vet who specializes in reptiles. She warns about zoonosis—disease that can be transmitted to humans from animals—and introducing a frog to other species in your household, such as cats and dogs, that may contract an illness or disease. Depending upon the illness, it may require that your frog be quarantined for a periods of time before entering your household.

- While there are a few of these diseases that frogs may carry, salmonella is one that most likely will affect humans. It may be contracted by direct contact with an amphibian, or through contact with materials in the frogs' habitats.
- "I strongly recommend the thorough hand washing for prevention," said Claricoates. "From parasites to bacteria and everything in between, you can run the risk of contracting a lot of things if you are not using proper hygiene." Be sure to supervise children around amphibians and help them wash their hands after being around pets.
- When it comes to health issues down the road, the biggest problems frogs face in captivity are usually related to water quality, husbandry and nutritional deficiencies, said Mede.
- According to Claricoates, frogs are prone to a disease commonly known as "short tongue syndrome," or hypovitaminosis A. It can cause eyelid swelling, weight loss, abdominal distention from fluid build-up and increased susceptibility to infection. The lack of vitamin A often comes from owners feeding their frogs only one or two types of prey, which are nutritionally insufficient. This can be prevented by speaking with your vet to determine a variety of dietary options for your frog to keep them healthy. You can find recommendations for exotic veterinarians in your area through the Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians.

Necessary supplies needed for reptiles & amphibians:

REPTILES

- Artificial or Live Plants – Most reptiles need some type of cover in their natural environment. Live or artificial plants will provide cover, reducing stress and aggression. Live plants also help maintain relative humidity.
- Driftwood, Vines & Branches – These items also provide cover and climbing surfaces for arboreal species.
- Plastic or Ceramic Caves – These items provide cover for ground dwelling and burrowing species.
- Natural-Looking Water Dish or Drip System – In the wild, reptiles drink water from various natural sources. Pick natural-looking water systems that provide water in a familiar format.

Maintenance Needs

- Substrate – Absorbs waste, keeps pet and cage clean, provides a hiding place, and helps maintain or reduce humidity. Improves natural aesthetic quality of enclosure.

- Litter Scoop – Removes waste from substrate.
- Fresh Water Spray Bottle – Misting the enclosure will provide humidity and drinking water for certain species.
- Book – Includes training information, breed information and instructions for ongoing care.
- Hand Sanitizer – Cleans and disinfects hands before and after handling.
- Pet Safe Disinfectant – For use in disinfecting the pet's enclosure.

Environmental Needs

- Enclosure and Secure Top – Provides a proper home for your reptile. Assures safety and security. Secure top keeps your reptile safely inside enclosure, keeps other pets and little hands out.
- Light Fixture – For use with fluorescent (UVB) & incandescent bulbs.
- Day Heat Bulb – Reptiles are mostly ectothermic (cold blooded) meaning they regulate body temperature by moving through a temperature gradient. Incandescent bulbs raise ambient air temperature to keep your reptile active, while providing a heat gradient.
- Night Heat Bulb and Ceramic Heat Emitters – Produces heat with little or no bright light to maintain temperature at night without disrupting rest cycle.
- UV-B Bulb – Allows animal to metabolize vitamin D3, which is necessary for calcium absorption. Must pass directly into animal, no glass or plastic between light and animal. The pet must be able to get within 12 inches of the light source.
- Under Tank Heater – Provides bottom heat for digestion & basking. Warms moist substrate for added humidity.
- Thermometer/Hygrometer – Monitors temperature and humidity in your reptile's environment, assuring it meets your particular reptile's requirements.

Nutritional Needs

- Pellet or Frozen Processed Food – Convenient supplement to live and fresh food. Helps to provide balanced nutrition
- Live Food – Live food such as crickets and mealworms , mice and rats are a great source of protein as well as carbohydrates, fats, and fiber. It also provides a vehicle for

giving your reptile vitamin supplements when dusted or gut loaded (see below). Many animals will only respond to the movement of live food.

- Fresh Food – Some reptiles require fresh fruits, vegetables and plant matter to thrive. Provides certain vitamins and minerals, as well as a source of moisture.
- Vitamin/Calcium Supplement – Ensures your reptile gets proper nutrition in addition to normal diet.
- Gut Load – You are what you eat, and so are reptiles. Crickets and mealworms lose all nutritional value within three days without food or water. Providing this to the crickets provides proper nutrition to your reptile.
- Moisture Cubes – Crickets need water to survive and some type of moisture cube is a more reliable and hygienic way to provide for this.
- Cricket Housing – Proper housing for your reptile's crickets will help ensure that they survive until dinner time.

AMPHIBIANS

- Line the bottom of the terrarium with 2 to 3 inches of coconut-fiber or bark bedding. Scoop the poop at least once a week and change the bedding completely once a month.
- Provide loads of live or artificial branches for climbing and froggy acrobatics.

Heat & lights

- Tree frogs are nocturnal. They don't require sunlight, but they do need lighting that mimics a day and night cycle in their habitat. If they're in a dim room, light the terrarium for 12 hours daily with a fluorescent bulb.
- At night, switch to a night-specific bulb so you can watch your frog with minimum disturbance.
- Your frog's terrarium temperature must be kept between 75 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, and 65 F to 75 F at night. If necessary, use a heat bulb or a night-specific heat lamp for warmth. A thermometer at each end of the tank will help you monitor the temperature.
- Keep the habitat humidity between 50% and 80%. Use a hygrometer — a device that measures humidity — to keep track.

Tree frogs need supplemental Vitamin D in their diets.