

Raise tadpoles at home

WARNING!
This activity will take several months. Remember you can only use frogspawn from one pond. Always ask for a grown-up's permission first.



TOP TIP
Frogspawn will start appearing this month. You can prepare all your tools in advance, so that you are ready to start when you spot it.

Collect some frogspawn from a local pond and watch as the tadpoles emerge and turn into young frogs

What you need

- A clean, empty nine-litre fish tank or similar container
- A safe place outdoors, with protection from direct sunlight
- Washed gravel to cover the base of the tank
- Water collected directly from a natural source, like rain or a pond (not tap water)
- A fishing net
- One large sandwich bag
- A handful of pondweed
- A clothes peg
- Rabbit pellets or lettuce leaves
- Fish food flakes
- Rocks

How does it work?

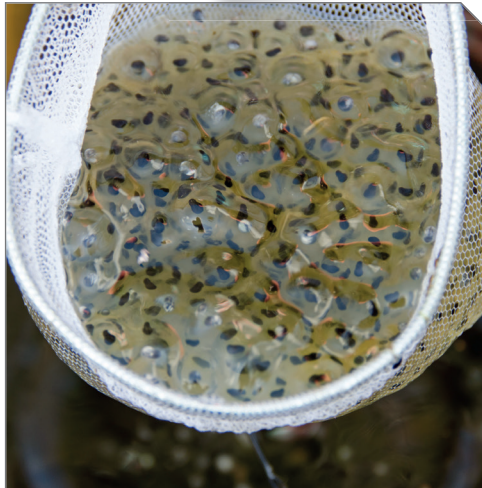
Looking after tadpoles and frogs isn't easy, so make sure that you're ready for the commitment before starting this activity. It takes a long time and you'll have to check on the animals regularly. Most of the frogspawn you find in the UK is that of the common frog, one of two British species. It's not illegal to collect and raise common frogspawn in the UK. Females lay the spawn in their home pond and often produce dozens of eggs. Only one in 50 survive to adulthood, which is why frogs produce so many. Tadpoles are perfectly adapted for living in ponds. They can control how quickly they transform into adult frogs depending on their environment. If they're surrounded by plenty of food and not too many predators, they will develop more slowly than if they are living in a dangerous, fish-filled pond.



1 Put your tank in a safe place outside. You want it to get about an hour of direct sunlight a day, and not much more. Cover the base with clean gravel, then gently pour the water on top. Make sure the base of the tank remains covered in gravel.



2 Grab a grown-up and head for a local pond with your net and sandwich bag. Scoop a small amount of frogspawn with the net (make sure to leave plenty behind) and put it in the sandwich bag with some water. Collect some pondweed too.

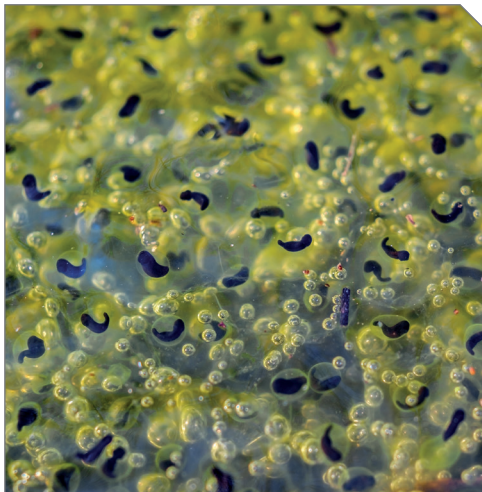


3 Bring the bag home and tuck some pondweed into the gravel at the base of your tank. Lower the bag of spawn into the water and peg it to the side of the tank. After a few hours, gently tip out the spawn.

EATING HABITS

Common frog tadpoles start out vegetarian but turn into carnivores as they grow – which is why you need to change their diet.

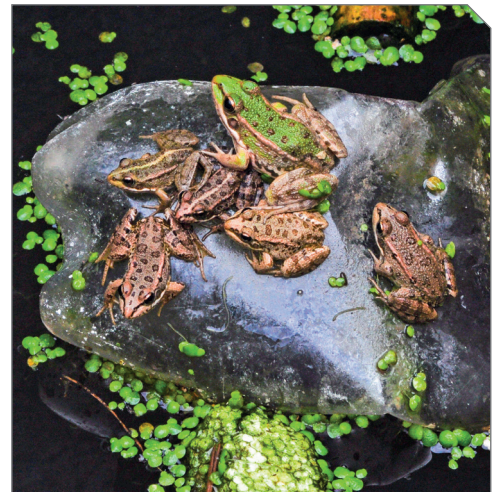
The common frog is the UK's best-known amphibian.



4 Over days and weeks, the spawn will turn into small tadpoles. Once most are swimming, clear the excess jelly. Change the water each week, using rain or pond water, leaving behind a quarter of the liquid that was already in the tank.



5 For a couple of weeks after hatching, feed the tadpoles rabbit pellets, or a boiled and cooled lettuce leaf. Wait until the food is gone before feeding again (every three to four days). Once the tadpoles grow rear legs, feed them fish food flakes.



6 Lay large rocks in the tank. As the tadpoles become frogs, they will sit on top of the rocks to breathe air. When they start trying to climb out of the tank at night, take them back to their pond and release them into the grass.