

Lizards and Skinks

Adaptations



Study*ladder*

Staying Protected

Some lizards have body coverings that help keep them camouflaged. Their markings and skin texture help them blend in with their surroundings.

The sharp 'thorns' on Australia's thorny devil provide good protection against predators and their markings blend in perfectly with the red sandy desert environments they live in.

Some species of leaf-tailed geckos from Madagascar look remarkably like dried up leaves. Being unnoticed is often the best protection against predators!



Tricking Predators

Some lizards have tough leathery skin which gives them some protection. Some lizards have markings that trick and confuse predators.

This shingleback skink from Australia has a tail shaped like its head. Hopefully if predators attack they will aim for its tail, thinking it is its head. This can give the skink a better chance of surviving the attack.



Venomous Lizards

Some lizards will attack if threatened. Large monitor lizards like Indonesia's komodo dragon are particularly aggressive. They also have venom in their bite which can be deadly for humans.

Australian monitor lizards and iguana, also have mouth glands that secrete venom toxins. They use this to kill prey but their venom is not dangerous to humans.



Defensive Behaviour



Sometimes lizards display unexpected behaviours, like hissing and making themselves look bigger, to ward off predators. Blue tongue lizards can flatten their bodies to look bigger. Some lizards can even run on their back legs to make themselves look bigger and scarier



Lizards such as Australia's frilled neck lizards can run on their hind legs. They also make themselves look big and scary by suddenly flapping up a frill of skin that usually lies flat around their neck and displaying their brightly coloured tongue. The sudden movement startles predators and allows them more time to escape.



Caudal Autonomy: ***A Defence Mechanism***

Many lizards have the ability to throw off their tail and regrow a new one. They do this when they are threatened by a predator.

When its tail detaches, the nerve endings make it continue to move, flipping around on the ground. This distracts the predator, giving the lizard time to get away unharmed.

Although the original tail had bones, the new tail forms from cartilage. The new tail is often not as colourful as the original tail.



The chameleon is a master of disguise. Its skin has the amazing ability to change colour.

Scientists believe this is due to special cells called iridophores in their skin. The cells contain pigment and are made up of tiny crystals which can change their structure, reflecting light in different wavelengths.

By relaxing and exciting the skin the chameleon can change its colour to be more camouflaged or to suit its mood.



Special Adaptations of Chameleons

- * They are well camouflaged.*
- * They can hold onto branches with their feet and tail, much like a possum.*
- * They have an extremely long and sticky tongue to capture prey from a distance.*
- * Their eyes can be rotated and used independently, allowing them to be able to see around them in all directions.*

