

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.



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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?



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_____ 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



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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.



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ANSWER KEY

Fish with a Stinging Tail

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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 |



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hidden in the sand.

ANSWER KEY

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7. f l e x i b l e

flexible

hint: able to bend easily

LD