

A Rat's World

Rats are really cool animals with some amazing abilities



Rats be nimble

Rats are excellent climbers and swimmers. They can scale vertical surfaces and walk along ropes and power lines, just like tightrope walkers. With their whiskers helping keep their heads above water, rats can swim for kilometres. They can even hold their breath and swim underwater.

Rat laughter

Rats make a “laughing” sound when they’re happy, such as during play, at feeding time or when someone is tickling them.

The world through whiskers

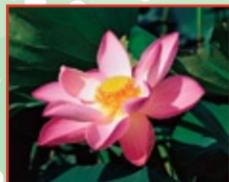
Whiskers may well be more important than sight for a rat. More sensitive than our fingertips, rats use their whiskers to create a detailed picture of the world around them. Their whiskers sweep back and forth, about seven times per second, brushing over the ground, objects, food and other rats. Each whisker can move by itself and in different directions. Rats can also extend their whiskers as far as two inches in front of their noses to “see” what’s in front of them.

Rat chat

Rats “talk” with different squeaks. They also talk using ultrasonic sounds only rats can hear. Baby rats have a special call when they want their mother. Another unique noise is made by rats when they’re upset – when they smell a predator, are in pain or lose a fight with another rat.

Glowing rats

Rats can see in colour, but they see mostly greys, blues and greens. But they can also see ultraviolet colours, which we can’t. In fact, under ultraviolet light, their bodies glow so they can easily see each other in complete darkness. How cool is that?



Human eyesight



Rat eyesight



Rat under UV light



Smell you later

Smell helps rats communicate. By sniffing, a rat can tell a lot about other rats – like whether they’re male or female, how old they are, what they’ve been eating and whether they’re family members.

Super night vision

Rats’ eyes are extremely sensitive to light. Living in dark places, they evolved the ability to see in near total darkness. Rats can tell the difference between tiny changes in light intensity, when it would just look pitch black to us! Since rats are so sensitive to light, bright light – sunlight and even intense household lights – can cause eye damage.

What’s that smell?

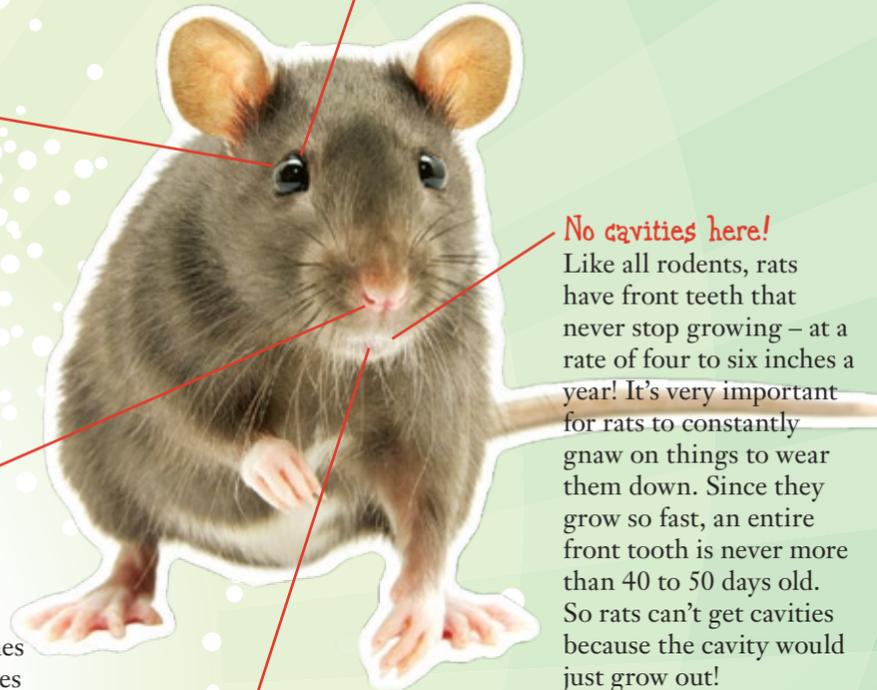
Rats have a fantastic sense of smell. Without moving their heads, they can locate where a scent is coming from three times as quickly as we can. This comes in handy when searching for food!

The big squeeze

Adult rats can flatten and squeeze their bodies through openings as small as a loonie.

A blurry rat world

Rat eyesight is poor – about 20 times worse than our own. Their depth perception is not good either, making it hard for them to judge whether objects are close or far away.



No cavities here!

Like all rodents, rats have front teeth that never stop growing – at a rate of four to six inches a year! It’s very important for rats to constantly gnaw on things to wear them down. Since they grow so fast, an entire front tooth is never more than 40 to 50 days old. So rats can’t get cavities because the cavity would just grow out!

Taste test

Rats taste sweetness, bitterness, saltiness and sourness – like us. They love sweet foods! When rats eat, they make faces like we do to show how much they like or dislike a food.

An amazing tail

Rats’ tails help them to regulate their body heat. The tail makes up only 5 percent of a rat’s surface area, but it can dissipate about 17 percent of a rat’s body heat. Rats use their tails to regulate their temperature by controlling the flow of blood through their tail – pumping more blood to cool themselves and less blood to stay warm.