

## Reptiles and Amphibians

One of the best ways to help students dispel misconceptions about herps is to have them examine their own feelings about the animals. In this part of the lesson your group can do just that by completing a survey. Afterward, they can help educate others about herps by creating posters and displays as a post visit activity.

### True or False

**1. Snakes are mean.**

It's important for students to understand that snakes, like other animals, exhibit a wide range of behavior. Some species of snakes are quite docile, while others are more aggressive. Behavior that students may label as "mean", such as eating other animals or biting is merely a snake's way of surviving.

**2. Most herps are ugly and gross.**

It is true that some people think herps are ugly. But, as with other animals, the way a herp looks has been honed by evolution into a design that helps the animal survive. For example, a snake's lean, streamlined body can slip into tunnels where mice and other prey animals live.

**3. Endangered species that are cute or intelligent, such as pandas and whales, should be saved before endangered snakes, frogs, turtles and other herps.**

People often favor cute, cuddly, or intelligent animals, but it's important to realize that all species have a role to play in their natural habitats. For example, snakes eat rodents, animals that can sometime do a great deal of damage to crops and spread disease. **It's O.K. to use the skins of alligators, snakes, and other herps to make shoes, handbags, belts and other products.** This is a matter of personal opinion, but it is worth pointing out that in **some cases harvesting reptiles can be against the law and cause the population to plummet.** For example the American Alligator once bordered on extinction because of over harvesting, but when regulations were put in place the animals made a comeback. They are being harvested once again, but the collection is carefully regulated.

**5. Touching a toad can give you warts.**

False.

**6. Most snakes are poisonous.**

False, snakes are not poisonous. Poison is something that is ingested or affects you topically. Venom is something that is injected into the victim. Most snakes are non-venomous. We do have some venomous snakes in the area, pigmy rattlesnake, copperhead, cotton mouth, eastern diamond back rattlesnake, and eastern coral snake. The coral snake is related to the King Cobra, and it's venom is different in the way it affects its victims.

**7. Reptiles are slimy.**

False, Reptiles have smooth dry scaly skin.