LEARN WITH AKSHADA · PHOTO LESSON

Birds: beaks, feet and wings

Every bird carries its own set of tools. Look at a bird's beak, feet and wings, and you can often guess what it eats, where it lives and how it moves.



For the parent *read in 1 minute*

All birds have **feathers**, a **beak** (no teeth), **two wings** and **two legs**, and they lay eggs. But the shapes are different, because each bird is **suited to the way it lives**.

The kingfisher in the photo has a long, pointed beak for catching fish, and small feet for perching by the water.

Beak

tells us what a bird eats

Feet and claws

tell us where it lives and how it gets food

Wings

tell us how it moves: soaring, hovering, gliding, or even swimming

Talk about it *before turning the page · 5 minutes*

1. **Why don't birds need teeth?**
   Listen for: the beak does the job: it picks up, cracks or tears food.
2. **Would a duck's flat beak be good for cracking nuts?**
   Listen for: no; nuts need a strong, curved beak like a parrot's.
3. **Which bird near your home have you seen eating? What does its beak look like?**
   Listen for: any real bird, e.g. a crow, pigeon, sparrow or myna, and a sensible description.

How to use these pages

- Look at one page a day: beaks, then feet, then wings. Cover the "Used to" line and let your child guess from the photo first.
- On a walk, play "Beak detective": spot a bird and say what its beak might be for.
- Finish with the quick check on page 5. The answers are on page 6.

Beaks: the right tool for the food

A bird has no teeth and no hands, so its beak picks up, holds, cracks, tears, drills, sips or strains its food.



Eagle

Hooked, sharp beak

Used to: tears meat into small pieces.



Parrot (macaw)

Strong, curved beak

Used to: cracks hard nuts and seeds.



Sparrow

Short, cone-shaped beak

Used to: picks up and cracks small seeds.



Woodpecker

Strong, pointed beak, like a chisel

Used to: drills holes in tree bark to find insects.



Hummingbird

Long, thin beak, like a straw

Used to: sips nectar from deep inside flowers. Sunbirds do this too.



Duck

Broad, flat beak

Used to: scoops water and mud, and strains out food.



Kingfisher

Long, straight, pointed beak

Used to: dives and catches fish.



Pelican

Long beak with a stretchy pouch

Used to: scoops up fish with water, then lets the water drain out.



Flamingo

Bent beak

Used to: feeds with its head upside down, filtering tiny food from water.

Feet and claws: made for the job



Osprey (a fish hawk)

Talons: sharp, curved claws

Used to: catch and hold prey, like this fish.



Goose

Webbed feet: skin between the toes

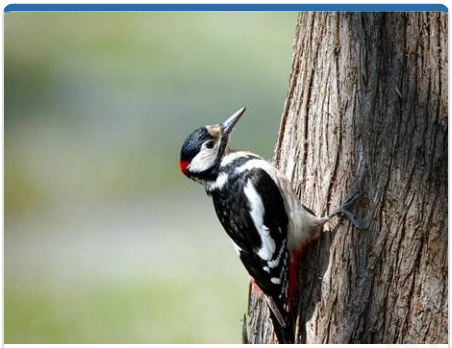
Used to: paddle through water, like oars. Ducks and swans have them too.



Parrot

Two toes in front, two behind

Used to: grip branches and hold food like a hand.



Woodpecker

Two toes in front, two behind, sharp claws

Used to: cling to tree trunks. A stiff tail props it up.



Robin (a perching bird)

Three toes in front, one behind

Used to: lock round a branch, even when asleep.



Hen

Strong toes with blunt claws

Used to: scratch the soil to find seeds and worms.



Ostrich

Long, strong legs with two toes

Used to: run very fast; it cannot fly.



Heron

Long, thin legs and long toes

Used to: wade in shallow water without getting its feathers wet.

Look closely

- **Count the toes.** Most birds have four; an ostrich has only two.
- **Look for skin between the toes**: that bird swims.
- **Sharp, hooked claws** mean the bird catches other animals.

Wings: different shapes for different journeys



Eagle

Long, broad wings

Used to: soar high on rising warm air, hardly flapping.



Albatross

Very long, narrow wings

Used to: glide over the sea for hours.



Hummingbird

Tiny wings that beat very fast

Used to: hover in one place; it can even fly backwards.



Swallow

Pointed, narrow wings

Used to: fly fast and twist and turn to catch insects in the air.



Owl

Wings with soft, fringed feathers

Used to: fly silently, so prey does not hear it coming.



Penguin

Stiff wings shaped like flippers

Used to: swim fast under water; it cannot fly.



Ostrich

Small wings for its big body

Used to: cannot lift it; used for balance when running and for display.

Not every bird flies

- The **ostrich**, **emu** and **penguin** are birds, but they cannot fly. They still have wings and feathers, and they lay eggs.
- Bats fly but are **not** birds: they have fur, not feathers, and feed their babies milk (mammals).
- Try it: flap your arms fast like a hummingbird for 10 seconds. Tiring! A hummingbird keeps it up all day.

Quick check 10 questions · answers on page 6

1. Which bird has a **hooked** beak for tearing meat?
   (a) duck (b) eagle (c) sparrow (d) hummingbird

2. A long, thin beak like a straw is best for:
   (a) cracking nuts (b) drilling wood (c) sipping nectar (d) tearing meat

3. Webbed feet help a bird to:
   (a) climb trees (b) swim (c) catch mice (d) run fast

4. Which bird uses its beak like a chisel to find insects under bark?
   (a) woodpecker (b) pelican (c) owl (d) hen

5. True or false: a penguin uses its wings to swim.
   ☐ True ☐ False

6. Match each bird to its beak. Write the letter.

1. Parrot ___	A. pouch for scooping fish
2. Duck ___	B. strong and curved, cracks nuts
3. Pelican ___	C. broad and flat, strains food from water
4. Kingfisher ___	D. long and pointed, catches fish

7. Why can an owl catch mice in the dark without them hearing it?

.....

8. A bird has two toes in front and two behind. Is it more likely to climb trees or to swim? Why?

.....

9. **Odd one out:** eagle, owl, osprey, sparrow. Which one does **not** have sharp talons for catching animals?

.....

10. **Who am I?** I have long, thin legs. I stand still in shallow water and wait to catch fish.

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Answers

1. (b) eagle. Its hooked beak tears meat.
2. (c) sipping nectar, like a hummingbird or a sunbird.
3. (b) swim. The skin between the toes pushes the water like an oar.
4. (a) woodpecker.
5. True. Its wings are stiff flippers; it cannot fly.
6. 1-B, 2-C, 3-A, 4-D.
7. Its wing feathers are soft and fringed, so it flies silently.
8. Climb trees (or grip branches): two toes in front and two behind give a strong grip, like a woodpecker or parrot. Swimmers have webbed feet.
9. Sparrow. It eats seeds; the others catch animals with their talons.
10. A heron.

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