



The Primate Family

Monkeys and apes belong to the biological order "primates." So do humans! Scientists have discovered no less than **three hundred species of primates**. Monkeys and other primate animals live in the tropical rainforests of Africa, Central America, South America, and Asia. Australia also has a strip of jungle, but no monkeys live there. And a colony of Barbary macaques lives only in the southern tip of Europe, in the tiny country of Gibraltar.

Monkeys are born climbers. With their opposable thumbs and strong tails, they can hold onto anything and swing from branch to branch and tree to tree. But this isn't true for all primate species. Baboons and gorillas, for example, prefer to stay on the ground.





Monkeys of All Shapes and Sizes

Among the three hundred primate species, you can see great differences. For example, the **Western pygmy marmoset** from the Amazon rainforest fits easily in your hand, as it's only 6 inches tall. Meanwhile, a standing gorilla is over 6 feet tall and can barely fit through a door. You have monkeys without tails, with small tails, and with tails over 3 feet long that they use like an extra-long arm. One monkey lives quietly with its small family, while others live in groups of sometimes more than a hundred monkeys of their species. But no matter how different they are, almost all of them enjoy playing and have well-developed brains. Primates are some of the most intelligent animals in the world.



The Most Beautiful, the Smallest, the Hairiest

Some monkeys have a striking appearance. For example, on the left page, the **black crested gibbons** look like they're wearing glasses. Although they're black, they give birth to gold-colored babies. On this page, the **proboscis monkey** on the upper right has a funny face. Its nose is so big and floppy that it covers its mouth. The **Japanese macaque** on the upper left often has a white coat, because it's one of the few monkeys that lives in a place with snow. There are even monkeys with long hair around their faces and some with brightly colored noses, like the **mandrill** on the lower right.