

ADAPTATIONS AND SURVIVAL: REPRODUCTIVE STRATEGIES

Have you ever marveled at the size and power of elephants? These intelligent creatures invest lots of time and energy into caring for their young. Elephants organize themselves into complex social structures led by a matriarch. All of the females in the herd care for the young calves, protecting them from predators and teaching them how to survive. These protective behaviors increase the odds that the calves will survive to adulthood. Many species of plants and animals have similar reproductive strategies.



A **reproductive strategy** is a specific type of behavioral or physical adaptation that:

- increases the odds that an organism will successfully reproduce
- increases the odds that an organism's offspring will survive to adulthood.

Let's explore! Read the passage below, and explain in your own words how each behavior described is an example of a reproductive strategy.

1. Male peafowl, referred to as peacocks, spread out and shake their beautiful feathers to attract a mate. Female peafowl, referred to as peahens, often choose their mate by the size, shape, and design of his tail. Scientists who study peafowl have found that the offspring of peacocks with more colorful eyespots on their tails are bigger at birth and better at surviving than the offspring of peacocks with fewer eyespots.



- a.** Explain how the mating ritual of a peacock is an example of a reproductive strategy.

- b.** Explain how peahens selectively choosing a mate is an example of a reproductive strategy.

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Keep going! Read the passages and answer the questions below.

2. A peahen creates a nest for her eggs by scraping out a shallow depression in the ground and lining it with grass or other vegetation. She then sits on the eggs for about a month to keep them warm. Peafowl eggs need to be incubated at a specific temperature to develop into healthy peachicks. If the temperature is too cold, the eggs will hatch late or not at all.



4. Once hatched, peachicks stay with their mother for several months. A peahen will protect her peachicks from predators and teach them how to find food, care for their feathers, and communicate.

Explain how the peahen's nesting behavior is an example of a reproductive strategy.

3. A peahen will usually lay three to eight eggs in her nest. Once hatched, peachicks are very vulnerable. Out of every six peachicks that hatch, typically only two survive to adulthood.

Explain how laying multiple eggs at a time is an example of a reproductive strategy.

Explain how the parental care that a peahen provides to her peachicks is an example of a reproductive strategy.
