

## Monday

1. Read the text two times. Make sure at least one of these times is read out loud.
2. The subtitles have been taken out of the text.

These are the subtitles:

- Scavenger behaviour
- Tree climbing
- Life at night
- Reproduction
- “playing possum”

Read through the paragraphs and decide where each of the subtitles go

# OPOSSUMS

There are several dozen different species of opossum, which are often called possums in North America. The most notable is the Virginia opossum or common opossum—the only marsupial (pouched mammal) found in North America.



A female opossum gives birth to helpless young as tiny as honeybees. Babies immediately crawl into the mother's pouch, where they continue to develop. As they get larger, they will go in and out of the pouch and sometimes ride on the mother's back as she hunts for food. Opossums may give birth to as many as 20 babies in a litter, but fewer than half of them survive. Some never even make it as far as the pouch.

Opossums are scavengers, and they often visit human homes or settlements to raid garbage cans, dumpsters, and other containers. They are attracted to carrion and can often be spotted near roadkill. Opossums also eat grass, nuts, and fruit. They will hunt mice, birds, insects, worms, snakes, and even chickens. Opossums are omnivores and will eat almost anything they can find.

These animals are most famous for “playing possum.” When threatened by dogs, foxes, or bobcats, opossums sometimes flop onto their sides and lie on the ground with their eyes closed or staring fixedly into space. They extend their tongues and generally appear to be dead. This ploy may put a predator off its guard and allow the opossum an opportunity to make its escape.

Opossums are excellent tree climbers and spend much of their time aloft. They are aided in this by sharp claws, which dig into bark, and by a long prehensile (gripping) tail that can be used as an extra limb. Opossums nest in tree holes or in dens made by other animals.

Opossums are nocturnal and spend the day safely hidden in hollow trees or holes in the ground. They have a suite of super senses that makes them perfectly adapted to life at night. They find food by smell rather than sight, aided by long, tactile whiskers to feel their way in the dark. Their hearing protects them from predators, particularly when they leave the safety of trees to forage on the ground.

**Extension:** Look up any vocabulary you are unfamiliar with.