











Bats are like

We shouldn't touch bats with our bare hands but here is a description of a bat that will help you imagine what a real live bat feels, looks and sounds like.

Bats'	is/are like...	Photo
<p>Ears</p> 	<p>... human ears</p> <p>The long-eared bats have huge ears! When they sleep they tuck them under their wings. As they unfold they look like ram's horns, but when flying or about to take off they stretch them up to full length—nearly as long as their body.</p>	
<p>Teeth</p> 	<p>... sharp pins</p> <p>Bats have sharp teeth that are quite big compared to the size of the bat. Bats need sharp teeth to hold on to wriggly insects as they fly and to crunch through their hard outsides.</p>	
<p>Fur</p> 	<p>... our hair</p> <p>Like many small mammals, baby bats have no fur when they are born but it starts to grow in the first few days. Some adult bats have quite long shaggy fur, but in some other species, like the noctule (see photo) it is short and dense. Most bats have no fur on their wing membranes; some species have a little close to the body.</p>	

<p>Wing and tail membranes</p> 	<p>... an umbrella</p> <p>Stretching between the fingers and the body is a double layer of skin, the wing membranes. This is soft and stretchy but strong, with elastic fibres, muscles and blood vessels in it. It feels rather like a balloon that has been blown up and let down again.</p>	
<p>Finger bones</p> 	<p>... our fingers but much longer</p> <p>A bat flies with its arms and its hands. It has just the same bones as us, but some of them are much longer. It has shoulders, elbows, and wrists, just like us. Unlike bats, the first bones of our fingers are hidden in the palm of our hand. Look at the back of your hand and wriggle your fingers – you can see the other bones move under the skin.</p>	
<p>Knees</p> 	<p>... our knees but pointing backwards</p> <p>Bats' knees bend the opposite way to ours! They have to, otherwise they would get in the way when they hang up. It also helps them to crawl effectively and squeeze quickly in to tight crevices to avoid predators.</p>	
<p>Feet, toes and nails</p> 	<p>...hooks</p> <p>A bat's toes automatically grip, so it can hang "upside down". A baby bat is born with big feet and thumbs, almost the same size as its mother, as it must be able to hang on to mum or to its roost from the time it is born. The claws on its toes and thumb help it to grip better. Unlike us, it has no claws on its four fingers. We have them (though we call them nails) on all our fingers and toes.</p>	

Voice



... a sat nav

Bats have a voice like us to produce sounds. Although we are able to hear some of the sounds bats make when they chatter together (social calls) they use calls too high for us to hear when flying and feeding in darkness. The returning echoes from these calls as they bounce off things around them give them a 'sound picture' in the darkness, where we need a torch to give us a light picture. We can hear these calls only when we use a bat detector.



Body size



... the size of your thumb

When flying, bats look much bigger than they are because their wings are so large. British bats are tiny. A pipistrelle with its wings folded could fit inside a small match box, yet in flight its looks about the size of a sparrow. A pipistrelle has a wing span of around 20cm (19-25cm)
Even our largest British bats, which look as big as a blackbird when they fly have much smaller bodies than birds'.



Weight

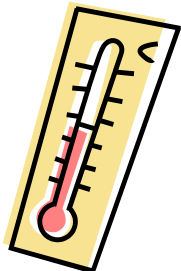


... the weight of a coin

Bats are light. A pipistrelle weighs around 4-6 grams. This is just slightly lighter than a 2 pence coin which weighs 7 grams.



Temperature



... a super hero power

They can raise and lower their body temperature at will. Our temperature is the same all the time unless we are unwell, and even then it changes very little. When their insect food is in short supply bats save energy by dropping their temperature. When it matches the temperature of the air around them they don't have to use any energy to keep warm. To raise their temperature again they shiver – as you do too when you're very cold.



Appetite



... a super hero power

Bats use such a lot of energy when they fly that they need LOTS of food, much more for their size than us. After a good meal of insects they may have put on a third of their body weight. Just imagine!



In captivity, bats are fed on mealworms

Vision



... ours but in black and white

Bats have very good eyesight. They are not blind! Their eyes are adapted to low levels of light and they see in black white and grey (not colour like humans). There's no point in their having colour vision, as bats in the UK only come out at night. We can't see colour in the dark either. Some bats in other countries can see in colour vision.

