

How do bats find their way in the dark?



Bats fly around at night, zooming between the trees and catching tiny bugs. How do they find their way when it is so dark?



Why?

1. Bats are not blind! But in the dark, many bats use their ears.

Bats can see. But even good eyes can't spot a tiny moth far away in the dark.

2. A bat makes lots of tiny, high squeaks.

They are so high that your ears can't hear them. Each squeak flies out, hits something, and bounces back, like a ball bouncing off a wall. That bounced-back sound is called an echo.

3. Big ears catch the echoes.

If an echo comes back fast, the thing is close. If it takes longer, the thing is far away. Echoes tell the bat where things are, how big they are, and if they are moving. It is like drawing a picture with sound!

Try it! Clap for an echo

You need: a big empty gym, a tunnel, or a tall wall far across a field, and a grown-up to take you

1. Ask a grown-up to take you to a big empty gym, a tunnel, or a tall wall far across a field.
2. Clap your hands once, loud and sharp.
3. Listen. Do you hear your clap come back?

What happened? Your clap flew out, hit the wall, and bounced back to you. That is an echo, just like a bat's squeak.

Video + more questions:
whywhywhykids.com/bats



scan with a grown-up