

The parts of a donkey

Written from the donkey's perspective

My **eyes** are at the side of my head, which means I can't see you clearly if you come up to me from the front. If you would like to be close to me, please walk up to me from the side, then I can see you well, otherwise I might get a fright and kick out at you by mistake. I am not as nervous or jumpy as my cousin the horse, but I need to be sure that you won't harm me.

Talking of my cousin the horse, my **ears** are much longer than his. I don't mean to boast, but I think I can hear far better than he can. When my ancestors lived in the semi-desert with very few plants, they spread out very far to find enough food. To stay in contact with each other, they brayed loudly. Because they had good ears they could hear each other more easily across great distances.

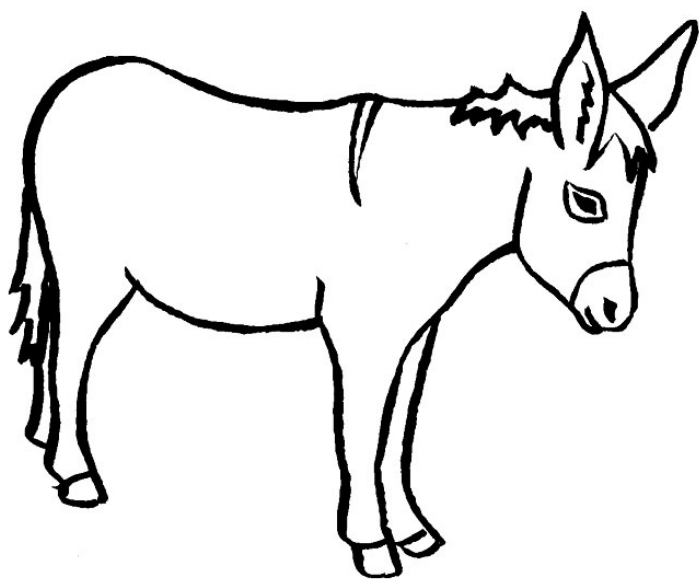
My **mouth** is large and soft. If you are very clever you can learn to tell my age by looking at my teeth. It's a bit rude to force my mouth open to check my age, so please ask my permission first.



I have a part with quite a difficult name: it is called the **withers**. This is the highest point on the ridge of my back, between my shoulder blades. I have a dark line that runs down the length of my back and another one that runs down from my withers. Together these two lines make a **cross**. Not all my brothers and sisters have this beautiful cross on them. Ask someone to show you a picture. There is even a story about where this cross came from, but I can't remember it now. Perhaps you can find out for me.

My **legs** and **back** are very strong. I could carry you on my back and walk with you for the whole day – as long as you are not too big and heavy of course. Sorry to keep bringing up my cousin the horse, but he does like to boast about how much faster he is than me. This is true, but he definitely can't travel as far as I can. I am slower but I won't stumble over difficult ground like he sometimes does. Perhaps this is because my **hooves** (my feet) are very strong and smaller than his.

I have seen some strange hooves on other animals like pigs and goats. Their hooves are split into two toes, can you believe it? All my cousins, the horse, zebra and mule are like me, we have only **one toe**. Our feet are called single-hoofed feet. Animals with a split toe like sheep, goats and cattle have cloven hooves, that is, hooves that are split.



My **hooves** are like your fingernails, they keep growing. If they are not cut regularly by a farrier (that's a donkey foot doctor in case you didn't know) they grow and twist and can break and make me lame. Luckily I don't feel any pain when the farrier trims my hooves. I believe that you also don't feel pain when your mother cuts your fingernails.

I have a **coat** of short, smooth hair. Some of my brothers and sisters grow long shaggy coats to keep them warm in winter. In summer

when it's hot they lose the shaggy hair and look smooth again, like me. I'm not jealous of them because as long as you don't leave me out in the rain and I have a shelter, I'm fine. I must admit I do sometimes get jealous of my horse cousin who has a waterproof coat. Luckily where I live there is not much rain and I have a shelter.

My **mane** is short and spiky and it runs from the top of my head down to my withers. A few of my brothers and sisters have long manes and I like to tease them and tell them they look like a horse.

My **tail** is the last body part that I want to mention. It's last but not least. It is very important to help me keep flies and insects away. It might be a bit on the thin side but it is nice and long.

Activity: Please draw me a friend in the space below. I don't like to be alone!