

**READ THE ESSAY** Think about the similarities and differences between mice and rats.**Mice and Rats**

People use the words *mouse* and *rat* when talking about small, furry animals with big ears, a pointy nose, and a long tail. However, there are many different kinds of rats and mice, such as the Norway rat, black rat, house mouse, and deer mouse. The most common rat that people usually see is the Norway rat, while the house mouse is the most common mouse that people find in their homes.

If the differences between a rat and mouse confuse you, you are not alone. Norway rats and house mice both come from the same relative, which lived millions of years ago. As a result, they have many traits in common. Both Norway rats and house mice have long tails, whiskers, and round ears. They can also be similar colors, including gray, brown, white, and black.

However, there are many differences between Norway rats and house mice. The Norway rat is much bigger than the house mouse. A Norway rat can weigh over ten times as much as a house mouse and is usually three times as large. Also, a Norway rat has big feet and small ears compared to the size of its body. But a house mouse has small feet and big ears compared to the size of its body. And its tail is longer than its body, while a Norway rat's tail is shorter.

Now the next time you see something scurrying around the corner, you can tell whether it's a rat or a mouse before you yelp and scare it away.

**SKILL PRACTICE** Read the item. Write your response.

1. You catch a quick glimpse of a rodent. How can you tell if it's a mouse or a rat?

---

---

2. How are a Norway rat's ears and feet the opposite of a house mouse's ears and feet?

---

---

3. Why do the house mouse and Norway rat share so many traits?

---

---

**STRATEGY PRACTICE** Tell a partner how writing plus and minus signs helped you stay focused.