What Kind of Joint Is This?

The last part of the skeletal system is the joints. A joint is a place where two bones meet, or where a bone and cartilage meet. There are more than 200 bones in a human skeleton, so there are a lot of places where the bones meet. Bones have three different jobs to do. Bones must give shape and support to the body, provide protection, and work with the muscular system to help the body move. Joints can help with these jobs, especially the last one.

There are five different kinds of joints in the body. The first kind of joint is called a fixed joint. When the bones meet at a fixed joint, there is almost no movement. The bones are very close to each other and they stay that way. The skull is a good example of bones meeting at fixed joints. The fixed joints in your skull help protect your brain.

A second kind of joint is called a gliding joint. Your wrists have gliding joints. You can move your wrists back and forth. You can also move them from side to side. Try moving your back from side to side. You also have gliding joints in your backbone or spine, too.

You are able to rotate your head almost all the way around your body. You can do that because of pivoting joints in your neck. You can also pivot your lower arms because of the joints between those two bones.

The fourth kind of joint is called a hinge joint. Hinge joints allow movement back and forth, like the opening and closing of a door. Your elbows and knees are good examples of hinge joints.

Finally, a ball-and-socket joint allows a lot of movement. Try to make a big circle with your arm. The ball-and-socket joint in your shoulder lets you do that. Can you make a circle with your leg? You can do this because of the ball-and-socket joint at your hip.

**KINDS OF JOINTS**

- Ball and Socket (hips and arms)
- Hinge Joint (elbows, knees)
- Pivot Joint (head, arms)
- Fixed Joint (skull)
- Gilding Joint (wrist, spine)
Questions

1. What is a joint?

2. What are the five kinds of joints?

3. What is an example of each kind of joint?

4. Which type of joint helps the skeletal system protect organs inside the body? Why?

5. Which kinds of joints help the body move? How?

6. Your pelvis is actually a group of bones held together. There is not much movement at the joints in your pelvis. What kind of joints do you think they are?

7. When babies are born, they have a soft spot on the top of their head. This area allows the baby's head to fit through the mother's birth canal better. As the baby gets older, the soft spot closes up and the skull becomes more solid. Why is it important not to let a baby be hit on the head at the soft spot?
8. Label each of the joints shown below.

a. ________  b. ________  c. ________  d. ________  e. ________

Vocabulary Review

Write a good definition for each of the following words.

1. Ball-and-socket joint: ________________________________

2. Fixed joint: ________________________________

3. Gliding joint: ________________________________

4. Hinge joint: ________________________________

5. Joint: ________________________________

6. Pivoting joint: ________________________________