Let's get down to the bare bones: You need your skeleton. The **skeletal system**, or framework of bones, doesn't just hold you up. It gives your body its shape, protects your organs, and works with your muscles to help you move.

At birth, you had more than 300 bones, which fused together as you grew. By the time your body is finished growing, you'll have about 206 bones. Researchers at Wright State University School of Medicine in Ohio have discovered that kids who exercise have stronger bones as adults.

Your body has plate-like bones that cannot move, such as those that make up the cranium. The cranium protects your brain.

The stirrup bone, also called the stapes, is in the ear. It is the smallest bone in the human body.
Your body is made up of many movable bones, such as the humerus, which is located in the upper arm.

Your ribs provide a protective casing for important organs, such as your heart and lungs.

The spine is made up of 33 bones called the vertebrae.

The thighbone is called the femur. It's the longest and strongest bone in your body.

How else can you bone up? Make sure your body gets enough calcium. That bone-building mineral is found in foods and drinks such as yogurt, leafy greens, and milk.

Did You Know?

More than half the bones in the human body are in the hands and feet. Each hand has 27 bones. Each foot has 26 bones.
1. The author begins the passage saying, "Let's get down to the bare bones." The figurative meaning of "bare bones" is: "the most basic parts of something, without any detail." Why would the author start an article about the skeletal system with this figurative use of "bare bones"?

   A. the skeleton is made up of bones.
   B. a person's skeleton is basic to the structure of his/her body.
   C. the skeleton lacks details such as muscles, tendons, ligaments.
   D. all of the above.

2. To say "the ribs provide a protective casing," means the ribs

   A. cannot be penetrated.
   B. protect the heart, lungs, and other organs.
   C. can easily be broken.
   D. are not bones.

3. Which of the following functions does the skeleton not do?

   A. give the body its shape.
   B. protect the organs inside.
   C. combine with muscles to enable movement.
   D. tell the nerves when to feel pain.

4. A figurative use of "bone up" means to study something. The literal meaning of "bone up" as used in the article is to

   A. increase the number of bones you have.
   B. strengthen the bones in your body.
   C. become taller by lengthening your thighbone.
   D. make your backbone longer.

5. Why do you think hands and feet have so many bones, while legs and arms have fewer?
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   Answers will vary but might include that hands and feet need to make complex little movements in many directions, while arms and legs need to be strong.