Rabbit was a very tricky fellow, but one time, he out-tricked himself. It happened back in the days when Rabbit had a long bushy tail, just like Fox and Raccoon do.

Rabbit was always hungry. One day, he was hopping about, looking for something to eat, when he came to a wide, swiftly flowing river. On the far side of the river, Rabbit spied a vast, lush patch of clover. Oh, how he wanted that clover!

But Rabbit could not swim.

Just then, he spotted Alligator bobbing about in the choppy water. Alligator was a fine swimmer, but not a very agreeable creature. Rabbit knew that, no matter how politely he asked, Alligator would refuse to take him across the river.
Remember, now—Rabbit was a very tricky fellow. He called out to Alligator, “Brother Alligator, do you know that I have the largest family in the world?”

“You do not!” replied Alligator. “I have dozens of relatives.”

“That’s nothing,” scoffed Rabbit. “I have hundreds of relatives.”

Alligator swam closer. “Well, I have thousands!” he snapped.

“Thousands?” said Rabbit. “I don’t believe you.” He gave Alligator a sly grin. “Bring all your relatives here, and let me count them.”

Alligator was not to be outdone by a mere rabbit. With a few lashes of his great tail, he called all his relatives together.

“Have them form a line all the way across the river,” said Rabbit, “so I don’t miss any when I am counting.”
When the alligators were in line, Rabbit began hopping from one alligator’s back to the next. “One, two, three, four...” he counted. All the while, his mind was on the delicious meal of clover that he would soon enjoy.

Now, the last alligator in line was just as hungry as Rabbit, but it wasn’t clover that she wanted to eat. Just as Rabbit leaped from that alligator’s back to the riverbank, the alligator snapped!

Fortunately, Rabbit was as quick as he was tricky. The only thing that alligator bit off was Rabbit’s long, bushy tail.

That is why, to this day, rabbits have short tails—and they never go near alligators.