

Worms Worms Worms!

This lesson covers the main features of worms and what they do for the environment.

Objectives

- To identify the main features of worms.
- To understand what worms do for the environment.

Lesson Outline

Class discussion:

Identify the main parts of the worm's body e.g. head, tail, segments, saddle and bristles. Discuss the purpose of each, including the following information:

Saddle makes slime to help the worm move through the soil and produces **cocoons** (eggs) where the baby worms develop. Situated nearer the head than the tail on adult worms only.

Bristles are strong hooked hairs which help the worm cling to the soil. **Head** has no eyes or ears. Worms rely on their sensitive skin to detect movement and also breathe through their skin (which has to be moist). They have no teeth, so to digest food it must be moist and in fairly small pieces. A small sack called a **gizzard** grinds up the food using small pieces of grit.

The worm's body is divided into **segments** which help it to move. For movement it also needs **long muscles** and a 'liquid' skeleton.

Why are worms great for the environment?

- The burrows created by earthworms help to aerate the soil – they allow oxygen to reach the roots of plants which helps them to grow.
- They are brilliant recyclers, turning organic waste into rich compost (worm poo), speeding up the process in compost bins and in the garden. They can eat half their own body weight in a day.

Activity:	<p>Reveal the wormery, showing the finished compost and the liquid fertilizer. Explain how the wormery works. Split the children into pairs to study their worms in small trays of compost.</p> <p>Use lolly sticks to lift the worms carefully out of the compost. Use the magnifying glasses to look in detail at the parts of the worm and their movements. Try to spot cocoons and baby worms. Give each pair a sheet containing more information.</p>
Follow up/extension activities:	<p>Make some mini wormeries so that worms can be studied over a longer period of time.</p> <p>Make your own worm, using old tights or socks and elastic bands to mark the segments.</p>

Resources you will need:

- Worm information sheets.
- Giant 'Wiggler' demonstration worm.
- Pictures of cocoons and baby worms.
- Small bowls, spoons/lolly sticks and magnifying glasses (1 per pair).
- Wormery.

Hand washing facilities

