

Learning outcomes

Students will:

- ✓ Understand and know about the anatomy and living environment of an earthworm
- ✓ Gain an understanding of the importance of earthworms in nature's cycle.

Get to Know Your Worms

Materials Needed

- Magnifying boxes or glasses (for younger students)
- Worms
- **Worksheet B** - Warm up to Worms
- Paper towels (for older students)
- Toothpicks (for older students only).

Background Information

Over 7,000 species of worms inhabit the world, and they are vital to ecosystems. In ancient Egypt under Cleopatra's rule, it is reported that anyone who knowingly killed a worm would be sentenced to death. Today, there are engineers in India who are learning how to clean sewage water using worm systems.

The worms used in worm farms are surface feeders called *Eisena foetida*. They are also called earthworms, red wigglers, or redworms. There are loads of fun facts to know about redworms ([link to fun facts in website](#)). They have five pairs of hearts, one brain, no eyes, and no teeth. They breathe through their skin, and need dark, moist surroundings... Each worm is both male and female and can eat over half of its weight in food every day.

Management Skills

Worms are very sensitive to light, so handle them with care. Make sure there is a moist piece of paper towel in each participant's magnifying box and give them some bedding or worm castings as well. For older students, use moist paper towels and toothpicks.

Activity

This is the perfect activity to get students brainstorming questions about worms, describing their perceived characteristics, discussing how they recycle and why they have been held in high esteem by many cultures for centuries.

- Research and investigate the answers to questions raised while brainstorming
- Observe the earthworms in small groups, by putting an earthworm in a magnifying box. (Older kids may be best using a paper towel and toothpick.)
- Use the **Getting to Know Your Worms** worksheet to record observations over a few minutes.
- Discuss the questions brainstormed at the beginning of the lesson and research any unanswered questions.
- Compare characteristics described before the observation with actual characteristics and discuss the differences.
- Summarise the main points again.



Warm up to Worms

1. What colour is the worm?

2. What shape is it? Describe it.

3. How does its skin feel?

4. Is there a difference between the top side and the bottom side of a worm?
Describe what both sides are like.

5. Can you tell which is the front end of a worm and which is its tail? How do you know?

6. Can you see any eyes, ears, legs... a nose or mouth?

7. How does your worm move? Describe it.

8. What's the name of your worm?

9. Why are worms important for life on earth?

Name: _____

Date: _____