

Do earthworms bite people?

No. Earthworms don't bite anyone because they don't have teeth.

From Wonderful Worms, Linda Glaser, 1992

Why are earthworms so slimy?

Their skin needs to be moist in order to breathe. That's because earthworms breathe through their skin. Also, moist skin makes it easier for earthworms to move through their burrows. If an earthworm dries out, it will die.

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Why does a worm's skin sometimes feel rough?

If you gently move your finger along a worm's "belly side" from the tail end forward, it does feel rough. That's because worms have many bristles called **setae**. These bristles help the worm cling to its burrow when a bird or other creature is trying to pull it out. The bristles also help the worm move inside the burrow.

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If an earthworm breaks in two, does it really become two worms?

No. But if it breaks off close to the head or close to the tail, it won't die. Instead, it will grow another head or tail. However, the shorter broken piece won't grow into another whole worm.

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How long do earthworms live?

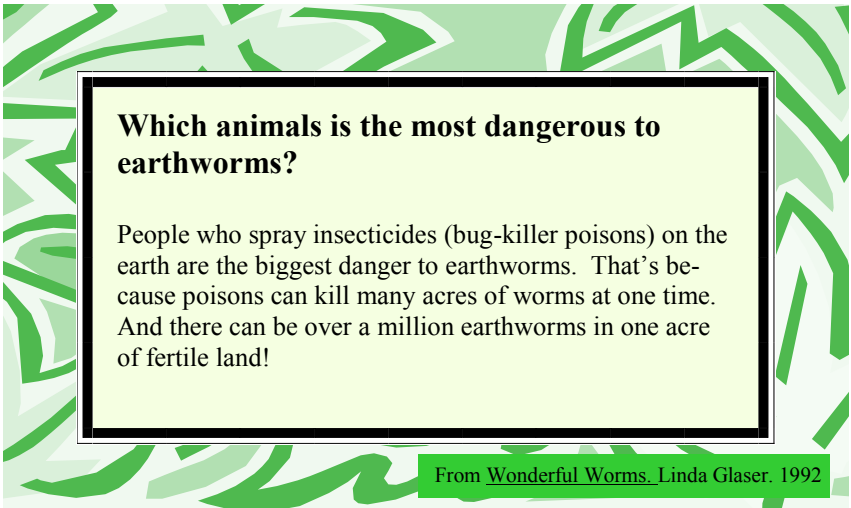
They have been known to live more than ten years. But most earthworms live less than a year.

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Which animals eat worms?

Birds, lizards, centipedes, frogs, toads, turtles, skunks, snakes, gophers, and moles all eat worms. In fact, moles catch earthworms and store them in their own burrow so that they'll have them to eat when they get hungry.

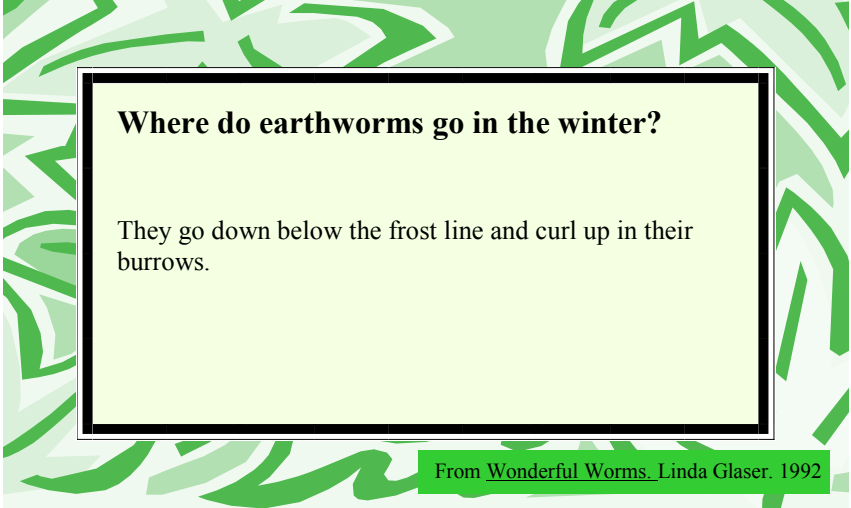
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Which animals is the most dangerous to earthworms?

People who spray insecticides (bug-killer poisons) on the earth are the biggest danger to earthworms. That's because poisons can kill many acres of worms at one time. And there can be over a million earthworms in one acre of fertile land!

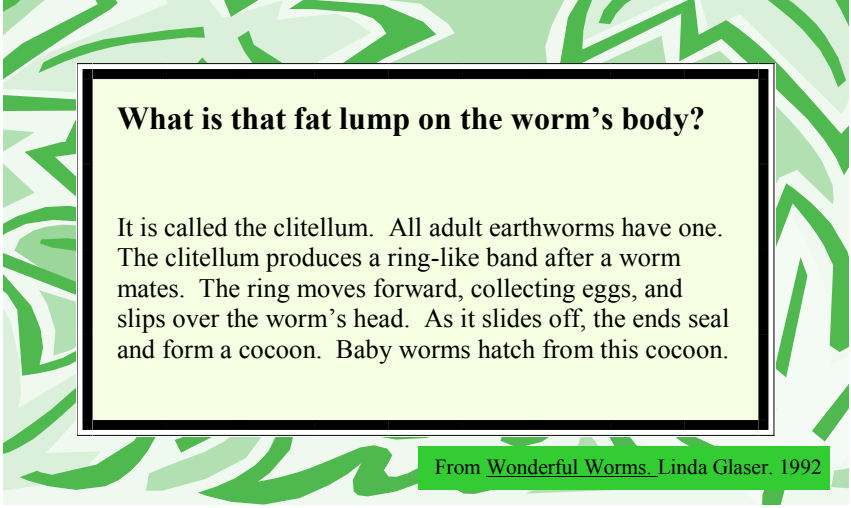
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Where do earthworms go in the winter?

They go down below the frost line and curl up in their burrows.

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What is that fat lump on the worm's body?

It is called the clitellum. All adult earthworms have one. The clitellum produces a ring-like band after a worm mates. The ring moves forward, collecting eggs, and slips over the worm's head. As it slides off, the ends seal and form a cocoon. Baby worms hatch from this cocoon.

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Where do baby worms come from?

They come from eggs. The eggs are inside a small, round cocoon. There are between one and twenty eggs in one cocoon. But often only one or two eggs hatch. When they hatch, the baby earthworms are thin and white.

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What type of worm is in a “wormy” apple?

It is not really a worm. It is a type of caterpillar. There are many insects that are called worms that aren't true worms, such as apple worms, inchworms, tomato worms, and mealworms. You can tell that they aren't really worms because they all have little legs. And they eventually turn into something else — such as butterflies, moths, or beetles. Worms don't have any legs and they never turn into anything else. They stay worms their whole lives.

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Are there other types of worms?

Yes. There are many types including roundworms, ribbonworms, flatworms, fanworms, and segmented worms. The earthworm is a type of segmented worm. There are about 12,000 types of segmented worms. A common one is the **brandling**, which is used for composting. An unusual one that live in Australia is the giant Australian earthworm. It can grow to be over nine feet long!

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Why do worms come out when it rains?

It's believed that they come out because their burrows are flooded and the water is no longer fresh.

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Why don't we see more worms outside during the day?

Worms are night animals. Because there is a danger of drying out during the day, they poke out of their burrows to find something to eat at night.

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How can you tell which end is the worm's head?

The head is slightly pointed. And that lump called the clitellum is closer to the head end of adult earthworms.

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Do worms have a top side and a bottom side?

Yes. The bottom side is often a little paler than the top side. If you put a worm on its top side, it will quickly turn onto its “belly side”.

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Does it hurt a worm to be put on a fishing hook?

Worms have sensory organs that make their skin very sensitive to the touch. And they do wriggle when they are put on a fishing hook. But we don't actually know what worms feel.

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How can one little worm really help in a big garden?

One earthworm can't do much by itself. But in one yard they can be thousands of earthworms. Together they mix the soil, supply it with air, and fertilize it. All this helps plants to grow. So earthworms are very important. Without them, our earth might not be the rich and beautiful source of life that it is.

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