



Ever notice how you find worms in the yard after it rains? When you dig in the dirt you might run into them, too. But did you know they're good for more than fish bait?

They actually make the dirt good for growing healthy plants and food by increasing the amount of water and air that gets into soil. They break down leaves and grass so plants can use them, and they leave behind castings, which make a great fertilizer.

It's hard to tell one end from another when you see a worm Even though they don't have a head like other animals, they have a head end, called the anterior Their tail end is called the posterior. At the front end, the prostomium, a flap of skin, hangs over the worm's mouth to keep out stuff the worm doesn't like

In between the ends, worms' bodies have a lot of rings called segments A full-grown worm has 120 to 170 segments Worms also have a band around their bodies called the clitellum The clitellum helps form cocoons, and baby worms hatch from the cocoons

Worms move with the help of their muscles Circular muscles tighten to make their bodies long and thin, which moves the front end forward Then long muscles squeeze together to move the icai end of the body toward the front end

Even though worms have five hearts, they don't have lungs Instead they breathe through then skin. In order for oxygen to get in though, then skin has to stay wet But too much water can drown them

To learn more about worms, visit the Web site www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/worms/index.html.

## Worms like to eat:

Fruit and vegetable peelings Cereals Commeal Crushed eggshells Coffee grounds Tea bags Newspaper

Worms don't like:

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Meat or chicken Animal bones Cheese Mayonnaise Greasy food Slick, colored paper

## Worm Facts

- Earthworms came to the United States in plants that Pilgrims brought
- Worms have no arms, legs or eyes.
- There are about 2,700 kinds of worms.
- The longest earthworm ever found was 22 teet long
- If it's cut off, a worm can grow a new tail However,
- a worm can't grow a new head
- There can be more than 1 million worms in one acre of land.
- Baby worms are smaller than a piece of rice when they hatch.
- If exposed to light for too long, worms become paralyzed.
- Each day, a worm can eat its weight.

