



## Information Note: Worms

In the UK, earthworms can be divided into 4 ecological groups.

**Anecic** - Deep-burrowing earthworms that feed on decaying organic material and soil. Large species with dark heads and red appearance.

**Endogeic** - Shallow-burrowing earthworms that feed on soil. Medium to large sized species with a range of pale colours.

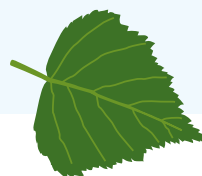
**Epigeic** - Surface-dwelling earthworms that feed on decaying organic material. Small sized species often with a red appearance.

**Compost** - Found in microhabitats such as rotting logs, manure and compost bins. They feed on decaying organic material. An active species of medium size with a stripy appearance.



### Worm Facts

- Worms have existed for about 600 million years.
- Worldwide, there are about 34,000 different types of worm. Some are so small you need a microscope to see them.
- Worms breathe through their skin, which must remain moist to absorb oxygen from the air.
- Worms are hermaphrodite, which means they have both male and female reproductive cells. They do however, need another worm to reproduce with.
- Worms lay eggs, which hatch as little worms.
- Baby worms develop in cocoons. They are babies for 60 to 90 days and it takes them about a year to become an adult.
- Worms can live for up to 10 years.
- Worms don't have a stomach. Instead, food goes directly to their intestine.
- Worms eat their own weight in organic waste, soil and minerals and excrete their own weight in castings daily. This makes compost and enriches soil.
- 12 million worms per acre can move 20 tons of earth each year.
- Worms are about 1,000 times stronger than people - relatively speaking, of course!
- The longest earthworm is the African giant earthworm, which can grow up to 6.7m long.
- Worms are tough creatures. If you accidentally cut an earthworm in half while gardening, only half will die. The piece with the saddle (the fatter, pink part) will survive.
- They are a badger's favourite food.





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COMPOST WORM



BRANDLING WORM



CHESTNUT WORM



GREEN WORM



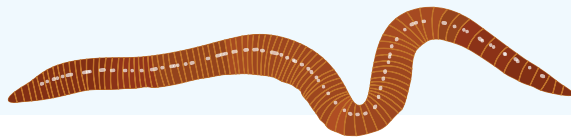
BLACK-HEADED WORM



OCTAGANAL TAILED WORM

### Can't identify your worm? It could be an immature worm.

If you've struggled to identify a worm, then it may be because the worm is immature. Immature worms do not have a clearly developed saddle.



IMMATURE WORM

Images courtesy of Harry Taylor © Natural History Museum [www.opalexplornature.org/earthwormguide](http://www.opalexplornature.org/earthwormguide)

### Looking for more learning resources, information & data?

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