

Animal of the World: Reptiles



THE SNAKE



Snakes are reptiles. They are usually land animals, but they can spend time underwater. They are cold-blooded, which means that their body temperature adapts to the temperature of their environment. If they are exposed to heat, their body temperature will be warm; and if they are exposed to cold, their body temperature will be cool. This is good for snakes because it gives them a great ability to adapt, and they do not need a certain amount of food to survive, unlike what happens with warm-blooded animals.

The body of the snake is long, cylindrical, and flexible, which allows them to stretch and roll as they please. In this way, they move throughout the terrain, although they have scales throughout their body that helps them reduce friction during movement.



Snakes can be found all over the world except for Antarctica and the polar areas. They are all fast and quiet but can move slowly if they need to. Also, they can swim, climb, dig, and jump, even though they don't have legs.

One of its main characteristics is the changing of their skin called shedding that they do at certain times of the year. This occurs for various reasons, either due to phase change or growth, to recover from skin wear generated by its displacement, or to clear itself of parasites, ticks, and dust. Another of their characteristics is that they are deaf animals since they do not have an external ear that can be seen and which they can use to perceive sounds. However, they have the entire structure of an inner ear that allows them to hear through vibrations.



More than 3,000 species of snakes are known across the planet. Some species are dangerous because they produce venom that they primarily use to immobilize their prey and eat it easily. Very rarely do they strike or release their venom as a method of self-defense. Some species are not poisonous; they use their bodies to suffocate their prey. This occurs, especially, with the largest snakes.



Snakes have two main characteristics of feeding. One of the characteristics is that they have a forked or divided tongue that serves as a sensor to detect movement, recognize odors, tastes, and vibrations. The other characteristic is that their jaws open very much thanks to the fact that the bones of their skull are not fixed, but rather flexible, so they can eat much larger animals in one bite. The prey they consume can last many days inside the body of a snake because they do not chew their food. They suck their prey little by little while their powerful gastric juices decompose, or break down, the prey.



Finally, most snakes are oviparous, which means that the females lay eggs. They lay their eggs in burrows or other safe places and protect them until they break and begin hatching. Some species of snakes are ovoviviparous, which means they lay eggs but don't lay them in burrows or other safe places. Instead, these snakes keep the eggs in their bodies until they are fully developed. There are even some viviparous species of snakes. This species' embryos develop inside the female and are covered by a placenta that supports them until birth.



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Answer the questions.

1. What does the body temperature of the snake depend on?

2. From the inference given in the first paragraph, explain why warm-blooded animals do not have the same abilities as cold-blooded animals.

3. From the information given in the text, discuss the various characteristics of the body of a snake.

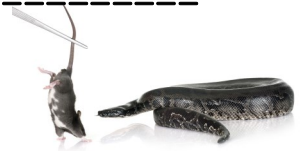
4. How are snakes able to perceive sounds without a visible external ear?

5. Why do snakes shed their skin?



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6. How do snakes capture their prey?

7. What areas do not have any snakes? Explain why those areas do not have any snakes.

8. Are all snakes poisonous? If are poisonous, what do they use their poison for?

9. What two characteristics do snakes use to feed?

10. Discuss the difference between oviparous, ovoviviparous, and viviparous.

