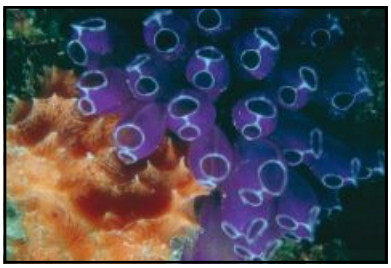
Invertebrates: Sponges

Sponges are the most simple of the invertebrates. Adult sponges live attached to rocks, making some people think they are more like plants than animals. However, sponges cannot make their own food; they filter food from the water as it passes by them.



Invertebrates: Cnidarians

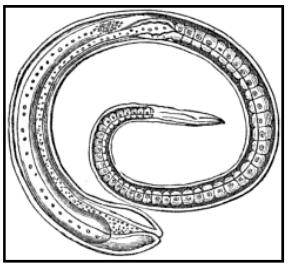
Cnidarians have a large central body cavity and a single body opening, called a mouth. Most have tentacles and stinging cells to help them catch their prey. Common cnidarians are jellyfish, sea anemones, hydras, and corals.

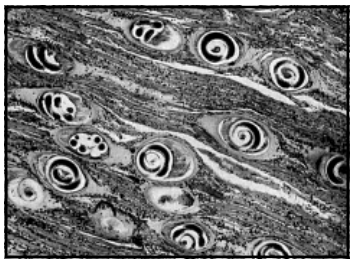
Invertebrates: Flatworms

Flatworms are invertebrates with a flattened body. They are complex enough to have internal organs and even organ systems. While some flatworms such as tapeworms are harmful parasites, others are beautiful marine creatures.

Invertebrates: Roundworms

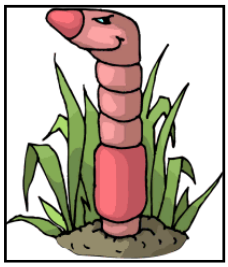
Roundworms have long, smooth, cylindrical bodies with a digestive system like a long tube down the length of their body. Trichina worms, one type of roundworm, live as parasites inside the muscles of pigs, and cause the disease Trichinosis in humans.

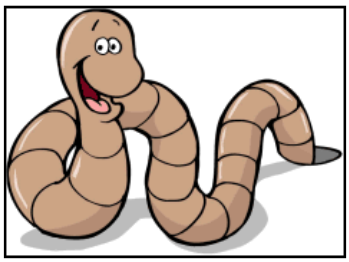




Invertebrates: Segmented Worms

Earthworms are the most famous example of segmented worms. Another name for these creatures is Annelids, which means "little rings." Their bodies are made up of small sections or segments, but they have internal organs and a long digestive tract. Some are microscopic.





Invertebrates: Mollusks

Most mollusks have a soft body covered with a hard shell. Snails and clams are of this type, but octopuses and slugs are mollusks without a hard shell. Squids actually have their shells inside their bodies. Mollusks are often eaten by humans and other animals.

Invertebrates: Arthropods

Arthropods is not only the largest group of invertebrates, it contains more species than all other groups of animals combined. They all have segmented bodies, an exoskeleton, and jointed legs. Insects, spiders, crustaceans, millipedes, and centipedes are all arthropods.

Invertebrates: Crustaceans

Crustaceans are a subgroup of arthropods that includes lobster, crabs, shrimp, crayfish, and even pill bugs and water fleas. They have the same three body segments as insects, but the head and thorax are sometimes fused into one piece, called the cephalothorax.

Invertebrates: Arachnids

Arachnids are a subgroup of arthropods that have eight jointed legs and a cephalothorax. They have no antennae or wings. Of course the most familiar arachnids are spiders, but this group also includes scorpions, ticks, and mites.

Invertebrates: Echinoderms

Echinoderms are marine animals that have a body arranged around a central point, like cnidarians. This is called radial symmetry. Echinoderms have an endoskeleton and spiny skin. The group includes starfish, sea cucumbers, sea urchins, and sand dollars.