

# Worm Apartments!

## Objectives:

*Students will!*

- Understand how worms interact with the soil around them to create homes
- Observe the formation of worm habitats
- Care for worms

*Educator Notes*

- There are around 4,400 species of worms on Earth and 2,700 different kinds of earthworms
- Earthworms are incredibly useful as decomposers that help break down organic materials
- Earthworms eat soil and the organic material in it, such as insect parts and bacteria (*E. coli*), and aerate the soil, mix the top rotting materials with the ground below, and enrich the soil with their worm castings or worm “poop”
- Worms can range in size from less than 1 inch to over 22 inches long and some can live as long as 15 years
- Observations indicate that earthworms enjoy eating oatmeal, old bread, vegetable scraps, leftovers, shredded newspaper, grass, mulched leaves, ripe fruits, etc., whereas things they try to avoid include acidic and spicy foods, salt, and vinegar products

## Materials:

- 2 clear plastic containers (one should slightly smaller than the other)
- Soil (or compost, if ready)
- Worms
- Screen or piece of stocking
- Rubber band

## Preparation:

Each child or each pair of children should have the materials described above. This activity may require children to get a little dirty, so caution should be taken and newspaper can be put under their workspaces.

**Key Vocabulary:**

decomposers | tunneling | habitat | nutrition | organic

**Activity:**

Fill the space between the 2 containers with a good supply of fresh garden soil (not potting soil), and keep it moist (but not soaked). Put in worms and cover the container with a piece of screen or stocking for good airflow. Secure this cover with a rubber band. Now watch the worms as they tunnel through the soil! (Be sure to keep this out of the hot sun, and free the worms after a few days of observation.)

**Wrap-Up:**

Ask the students what they observed during the activity. How did the worms affect their environment and create their own habitats? Make the connection that other animals do this as well – humans build houses, birds build nests, and worms build tunnels. All living things interact with their environments to form habitats.

**Extension Activity (K-5):**

Have older students take care of the worms for longer, research how to feed them, and what else they need to survive. Encourage further discussion about what constitutes a habitat for a creature and what living things need to live.

**Sources:**

<http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/worm-activities4.htm>

<http://www.uen.org/Lessonplan/preview?LPid=18886>