

# Let's talk about **SNAKES**



Snakes are reptiles that are found mostly in tropical regions of the world. The only places where there are no snakes are Iceland, Greenland, New Zealand, Ireland, and Antarctica. They are cold-blooded reptiles that depend on the heat from the sun and their surroundings to control the temperature of their bodies.

# SNAKE FACTS

- There are about 3,000 different kinds of snakes, and of these, about 375 are venomous. There are 126 types of snakes in the United States, but only 19 are harmful to people. The venom of the king cobra, the world's largest venomous snake, is strong enough to kill an elephant.
- Snakes are reptiles that have long, flexible bodies and no arms or legs, and they come in a variety of physical shapes and sizes. Those that live in water tend to be long and flat, while tree-dwelling snakes are long and thin, with a tail that they can use to wrap around branches. Snakes that burrow into the ground tend to be shorter and more compact. All snakes have unblinking, lidless eyes, that are each protected by a transparent scale. Snakes are deaf to airborne sounds, and so they 'hear' by picking up vibrations through their jawbones.
- Snakes come in a variety of colors and patterns. Venomous snakes tend to be brightly colored, as bright colors act as a warning to predators that they should stay away.
- There are some non-venomous snakes that are also brightly colored, and this is so predators will be fooled into thinking that they are venomous, and will leave them alone. Many snakes have similar coloring to their environment, as a means of camouflage, which helps them to stay hidden from both predators and prey. Snakes that live in captivity can live very long lives. There is a boa constrictor that is 27 years old and a South American anaconda that is 28 years old, both of whom live in zoos.

# SNAKE FACTS

- Snakes come in many sizes and lengths, depending on the species. A ground snake is about 5 inches long, while a python can grow to be 30 feet in length and can weigh upwards of 200 pounds. An anaconda can grow up to 38 feet in length, but the brahminy blind snake is just 2 inches long, making it the smallest snake in the world.
- Snakes only eat when they are hungry. That may mean that a snake will eat every 3 or 4 days, once a week or once a month. If a snake doesn't move very much and doesn't use up much energy, like some that are kept in zoos, they may only eat a couple of times a year. One species of Fer-de-lance, a deadly viper, has been recorded swallowing prey 1.6 times its own body weight.
- Snakes have more than 200 teeth that point backward, which they do not use to chew but use to bite and grip their prey securely. Snakes have the unique ability to be able to swallow prey three times larger than their mouths. They can do this because the tendons located in their mouths are highly stretchable and because their jaws are not attached to each other rigidly.
- A snake's scales are very smooth and fit together perfectly, and so there is no place for dirt or other objects to catch on snakeskin. All snakes shed their skin regularly in a process known as molting. They do this as they get bigger and as they age, and so their scales are usually in very good condition as they are replaced by new growth regularly.

# SNAKE FACTS

- Some snakes give birth to tiny living snakes that slither off and take care of themselves right from the start, but most snakes lay eggs.
- Snakes shed their skin by rubbing their head against something rough and hard, like a piece of wood or a rock. This causes the skin, which is already stretched, to split open. The snake keeps on rubbing its skin on various rough objects, resulting in the skin peeling off from its head, enabling it to slither out, turning the old loose skin inside out.
- Snakes are very helpful to humans. The small ones eat harmful bugs and insects, and bigger ones eat rats, mice, gophers, and animals that destroy crops. Many kinds of snakes are disappearing completely, as they are being killed for their skins or simply out of fear, and their habitats are continuously being invaded and destroyed by people.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Quick Quiz

Have you read the facts about snakes? Let's test your memory! General knowledge will also help. **Circle the best answer.**

Snakes pick up sounds through:

- a. Air
- b. Vibration
- c. Soundwaves

Snakes shed their skin by:

- a. Biting off their old skin
- b. Rubbing their heads against rough surfaces
- c. Waiting for it to fall off

Which is true:

- a. A snake's life span increases in captivity
- b. All colorful snakes are venomous
- c. Snakes use their fangs to grind their food
- d. All snakes live underwater

The world's largest venomous snake is the:

- a. Python
- b. King Cobra
- c. Rattlesnake
- d. Boa

Snakes have about \_\_\_\_\_ teeth.

- a. 150
- b. 200
- c. 100
- d. 250

The average incubation of a snake egg is between:

- a. 45-55 days
- b. 55-60 days
- c. 60-65 days
- d. 65-70 days

Snakes are found almost everywhere except:

- a. Asia
- b. Antarctica
- c. Europe
- d. Africa

Pythons kill their prey through:

- a. Choking
- b. Constriction
- c. Poisoning
- d. Biting

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