

Snakes

There are thousands of species of snakes – about 2,700 to be exact. Snakes are long, slithering reptiles that have no legs. About 375 species of snakes are poisonous, while the rest are basically harmless. A snake's body shape depends on where it lives. Snakes that live in the water are usually flat, while those that live in trees are long and slim with the ability to coil around branches easily. Snakes that live in soil are more compact and able to dig. Snakes come in many colors. Poisonous snakes are usually the brightest and most colorful. Their markings serve as warnings to other animals. Snakes with dull colors are usually able to blend into their surroundings so they can catch their prey by surprise.

Snakes range in size from as tiny as two-inch long Brahminy snakes to as long as 38-foot long anacondas. In captivity, snakes can live as long as 50 years. One interesting characteristic of snakes is that most of them have forked tongues. They flick their tongues to smell the air. Snakes are cold-blooded, meaning that their body temperature changes depending on their environment. When they need to get warm, snakes find sunny spots to sun in. When they need to cool off, they go into cool, shaded places. In winter, snakes hibernate. They also shed their skin anywhere from three to six times each year. Snakes also have transparent eye shields instead of eyelids, so you will never see a snake blink!

Most snakes lay eggs. There are some snakes, like boas, that give birth to live young. When snake eggs hatch, most young snakes are immediately on their own. The exception to this is some pythons, which do care for their eggs and young. Baby snakes that hatch from eggs have one "egg tooth" that they use to crack their shells. After a few days, this tooth falls out because it is no longer needed.

All snakes are carnivores. Many species of animals, from termites to small deer, are prey for snakes. Since a snake's lower and upper jaw can separate from each other, snakes are able to eat prey that is three times the diameter of their head. They have teeth that face backward to help them hold onto their prey while they swallow it whole! Poisonous snakes inject their prey with venom to kill it, while snakes known as constrictors, strangle or constrict their prey. Snakes usually hunt at night, and most of them do not need to eat every day. Some snakes, like anacondas and pythons, can go for up to year without eating.

Name _____



Date _____

Snakes Questions

Next to each statement, write "T" if the statement is true of snakes. If the statement is not true of snakes, write "F" and write the correct statement under the false statement.

_____ 1. Snakes are reptiles.

_____ 2. Snakes are plant eaters.

_____ 3. Snakes are warm blooded.

_____ 4. Snakes shed their skin every month.

_____ 5. Snakes chew their prey carefully.

_____ 6. When snakes are too hot, they go for a swim.

Name _____



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Snakes Questions

_____ 7. Most snakes give birth to live young.

_____ 8. Snakes use their forked tongues to dig holes in the ground.

_____ 9. Boas give birth to live young.

_____ 10. Constrictors strangle their prey.

Snakes Answers

1. T
2. F
Snakes are carnivores/meat eaters.
3. F
Snakes are cold-blooded.
4. F
Snakes shed their skin 3 to 6 times each year.
5. F
Snakes swallow their prey whole.
6. F
When snakes are too hot, they go into cool, shaded places.
7. F
Most snakes lay eggs/hatch from eggs.
8. F
Snakes use their forked tongues to smell the air.
9. T
10. T