

Science

Genre

Electronic Encyclopedias include articles, diagrams, and photographs on many topics.



Text Feature

Toolbars help you find more information or move to a different area in an electronic encyclopedia.

Content Vocabulary

reptiles
camouflage
hibernate
digested

Find Snakes

▼ article outline

Snakes

Physical Characteristics

Snakes are **reptiles**. They have flexible skeletons and no legs. Their bodies are covered with scales. Clear scales even cover their eyes. Most snakes are colored to **camouflage** them. For example, the emerald tree boa is green. This helps it hide among tree leaves. Other snakes, like coral snakes, are brightly colored to warn enemies that they are poisonous. Snakes range greatly in size. The dwarf blind snake is 10 cm (around 4 in.) long. The anaconda and reticulated python can be as long as 10 m (about 33 ft.).



Timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*), northeastern United States

Behavior

Like all reptiles, snakes are cold-blooded. They cannot make their own body heat. Snakes need the sun or warm surroundings to keep them warm. In cool weather, many snakes gather underground or in other sheltered places. There, they **hibernate**, meaning they stay at rest during the winter.

Printers



Features Tools Options Favorites Help

Contents Page Multimedia Related Articles

- Anaconda
- Coral Snake
- Emerald Tree Boa
- Skeleton

Using a Toolbar

Click on the Related Articles menu and select the subject about which you want to learn more.

Coral Snake a kind of poisonous snake found in North and South America. There are about 30 species. Coral snakes all have bright bands of color on their bodies and are two to three feet in length. They hunt lizards and other snakes.

Anaconda a member of the boa family living in swamps and rivers in South America. The anaconda, like other boas, wraps itself around its prey to suffocate it. It is one of the longest and thickest snakes and bears live young.

Coral snake



Hunting and Eating



Egg-Eater Snake
(*Dasyreptis scabra*),
Savannah, South Africa

Snakes are meat eaters but do not chew their prey. They swallow animals whole. Snakes can stretch their jaws far apart. This lets them eat animals that are bigger than their own heads.

Constrictors, such as boa constrictors, wrap themselves around their prey. These snakes suffocate their prey and then swallow it. Some snakes are venomous and kill their prey with poison. Venomous snakes, such as rattlesnakes, inject the poison through their fangs. Some poisons kill the animal. Others break down the animal's flesh so that it is partly **digested** by the time the snake eats it.



Cobra hatching

Raising Young

Most female snakes lay eggs that have soft leathery shells. Some females stay close to guard the eggs. Others, such as pythons, coil around the eggs to keep them warm. Some snakes give birth to live babies. Garter snakes can have more than 40 baby snakes at once. Snakes do not usually take care of their young.

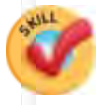


- Boa Constrictor
- Garter Snake
- Python
- Rattlesnake



Garter Snake a common and harmless type of snake in North America. They are fairly small (about two feet long) and usually have dark colors, with stripes running along their bodies. They live in moist areas and feed on toads, frogs, earthworms, and similar animals.

Connect and Compare



1. Look at the Related Articles menu on this page. What would you click on to find out how constrictors kill their prey?
Using a Toolbar
2. Constrictors often hunt animals that have sharp teeth, claws, or hooves. Why do you think they need to kill their prey before swallowing it? **Analyze**
3. Think about this article and *Dear Mr. Winston*. Which of the snakes you have read about would not make a good pet for Cara? Explain your answer. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**



Science Activity

Research a snake. If possible, use an electronic encyclopedia. Write a paragraph or two about the snake, and draw a picture of it.



Find out about kinds of snakes at www.macmillanmh.com

Write a Letter

Writer's Craft

Precise Words

The correct word choice, including strong, **precise words**, helps a writer create a message that is clear and interesting.



I used the strong word problem when I wrote to the zoo.

I closed my letter with a clear request.

123 Maple St.
Chicago, IL 41456
Jan. 24, 2008

Mr. Thomas Fine
City Zoo
450 Fairview Lane
Chicago, IL 60610

Dear Mr. Fine:

My family enjoys visiting your zoo.

The only problem we ever have is in the Reptile House. It is supposed to be open every day, but sometimes the doors are locked. How can we learn about snakes if we can't see them? Please make sure that the Reptile House is open all the time.

Yours truly,
Adrianna O.



Your Turn

It's your turn to speak out about something you think is important.

Use a business letter to tell a person or a company about a problem. Be sure to use precise words and correct punctuation. Use the Writer's Checklist to check your writing.

Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Did I state my problem clearly? Can I add convincing facts and opinions?
- Organization:** Did I follow correct letter form? Does the order of the information make sense?
- Voice:** Did I use formal language in my letter?
- Word Choice:** Did I choose **precise words** so that my message is strong but polite?
- Sentence Fluency:** Did I avoid run-on sentences?
- Conventions:** Did I use abbreviations with a period? Did I check my punctuation and spelling?