

Learn About

Ants

With





Interesting Insects

There are over 20,000 species of ants worldwide, found on every single continent except Antarctica. There are so many ants in the world that it is estimated that there are 1 million ants for every one human in the world. Not surprising when you realize that ants have lived on Earth for more than 100 million years.

Ants live in colonies (also called formicaries) of millions. A colony is made up of one or more egg-laying queens, but most of those millions are female worker ants who tend to the queen, build and maintain the nest, forage for food, and care for the young.

Male ants, which have wings, have only one function—to mate with the queen. They have the shortest life spans of all the ants.

Most ants build mounds from dirt or sand, but some use twigs to make the mounds stronger. Under the mound is a network of tunnels that connect all the rooms (or chambers) where food is stored, babies are nursed, and worker ants rest. Ants never sleep, but a little rest now and then is good for the workers.

Still other ants live in fallen trees or logs. Carpenter ants build their nests in wood and can cause significant damage to human homes.



Amazing Ant Facts

Ants are the longest living insects, though most only live about 45-60 days. Some queens live for many years and produce millions of babies. In fact, the queen of the *Pogonomyrmex Owyhee* ant can live up to 30 years.

Ants can carry 20 times their own body weights, which makes them the strongest creatures on earth in relation to their size. If you could pick up a car without help, you would be as strong as an ant.

Other interesting ant facts:

- The trap jaw ant can snap its jaws closed at 140 mph, giving it the record for the fastest movement in the animal kingdom.
- The bullet ant that lives in the Amazon rainforest has a sting that has been compared to being hit by a bullet
- Fire ants cause over \$4 billion in damage a year in vet and medical bills and crop damage. Their bite causes a burning sensation, which is where they get their name.

Ant Bodies and Features

Ant bodies have three parts: the head, the thorax (or mesosoma), and the abdomen (or metasoma). Ants have six legs which are all attached to the trunk.

Ants don't have ears—they 'listen' by feeling vibrations through their feet. Most ants have supersonic vision because they have two compound eyes made of many lenses and three small simple eyes that detect light. However, some ants are eyeless and communicate only by using their antennae.

Ants' antennae allow them to hear, taste, touch, and smell. They also use them to talk to one another.

Another way ants communicate is with the release of chemical signals (pheromones) to send messages to other ants. They send out warnings of danger, leave trails that lead to food sources, and use the signals to attract mates. Now you know why the ants approach your picnic food in a straight line! They are following a pheromone trail.

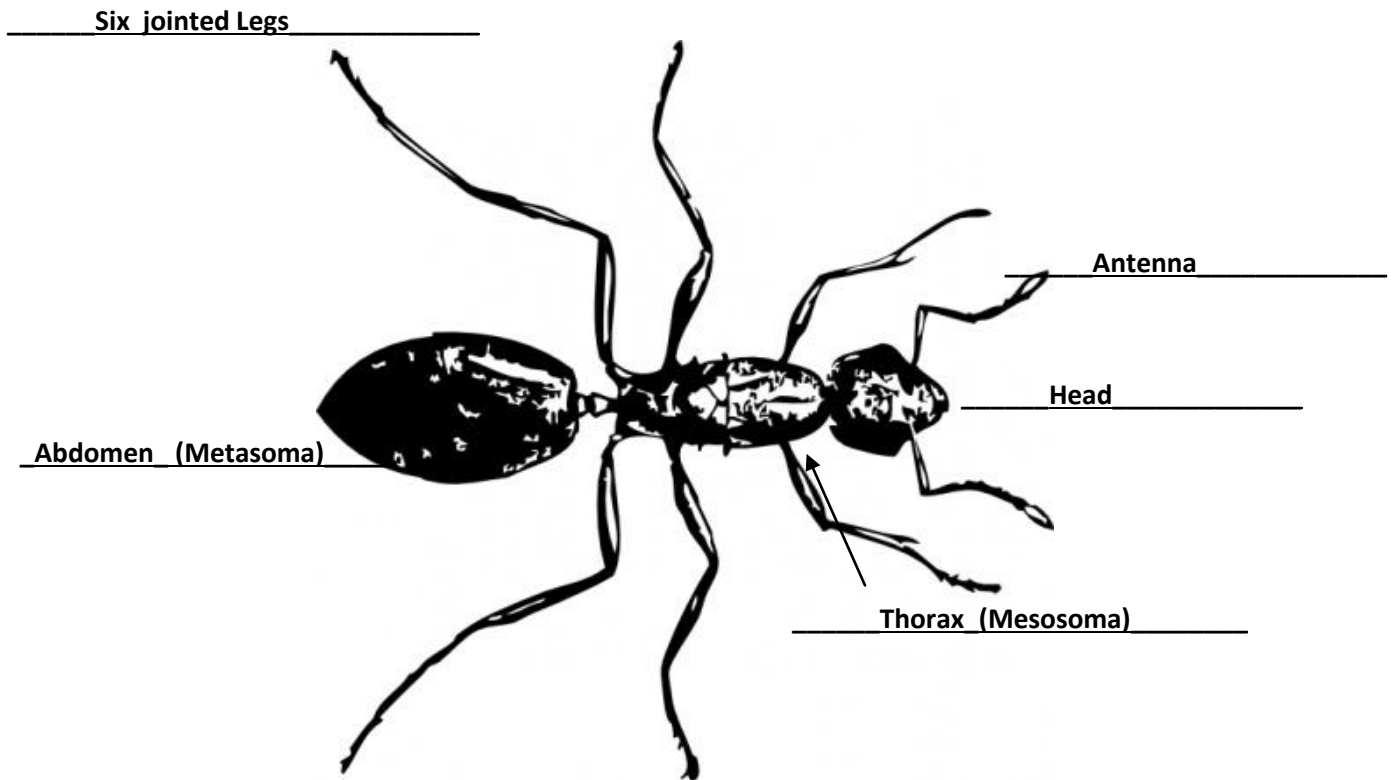
The ant's head has a pair of large, strong jaws called mandibles. They open and shut sideways, resembling a pair of scissors. Adult ants can't chew and swallow food, so they squeeze the juice out of pieces of food and then throw away the leftover dry part.

Ants don't have lungs. Rather, they have tiny holes all over their bodies that take in oxygen. An ant's blood travels through one long tube that runs from its head to its rear alongside a nerve cord.

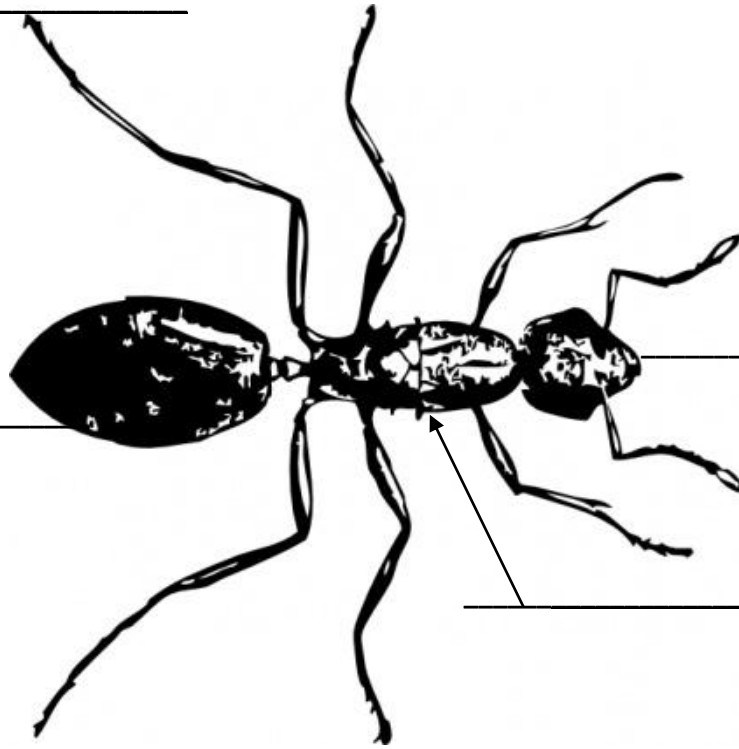
When a queen ant dies, the whole colony dies with her. Queens are rarely replaced, and workers are unable to reproduce, so as the workers reach the ends of their life spans, the colony dies out.



Parts of an Ant



Label the Ant

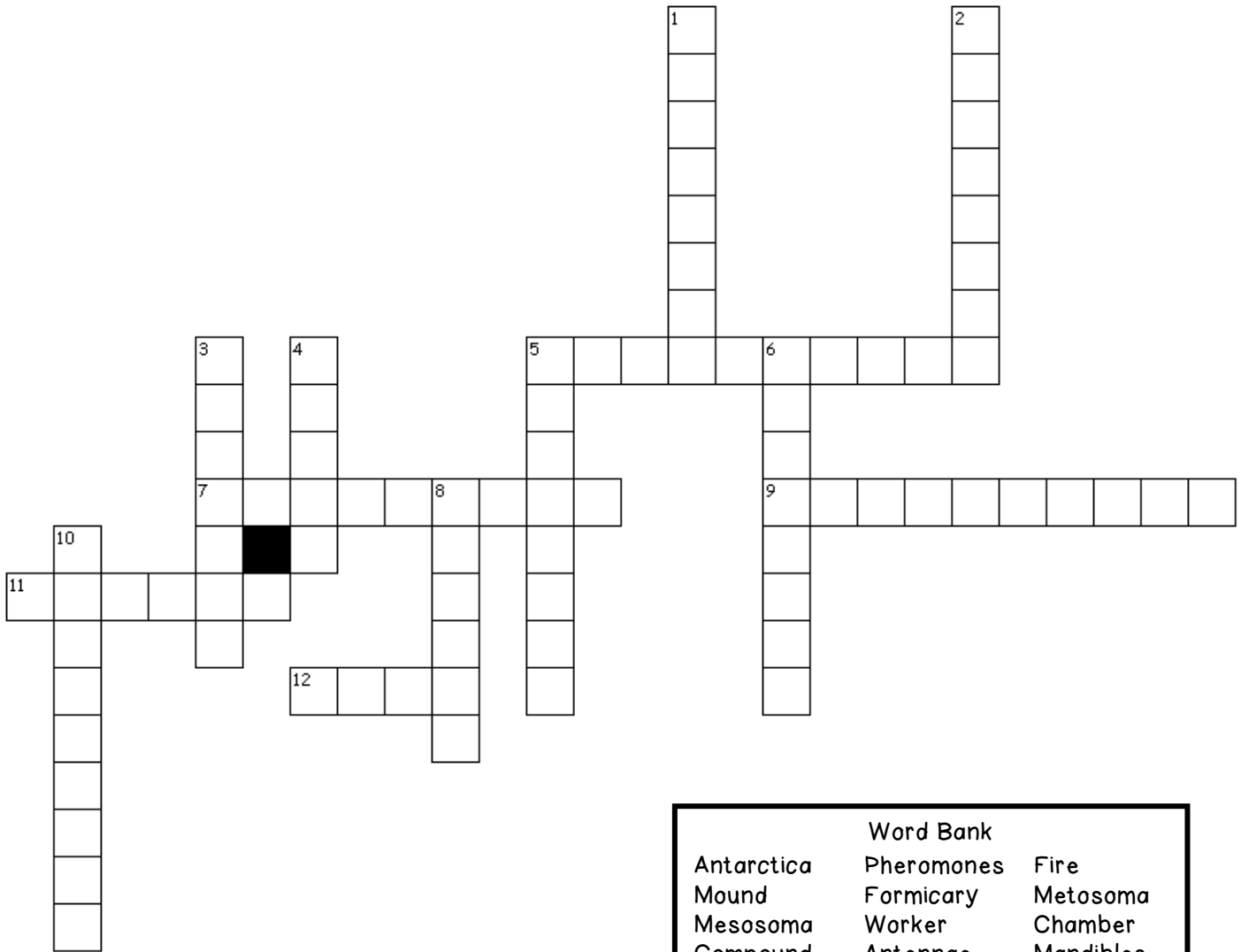


Fill in the Blank

1. Ants can be found on every continent in the world except_____.
2. Ants live in _____ of millions.
3. Most of the millions of ants are female _____ ants.
4. Most ants build _____ of dirt or sand.
5. _____ ants cause \$4 billion in damage per year.
6. List the 3 parts of an ants' body:

7. Ants have 2 _____ eyes and 3 simple eyes.
8. The chemical signals left by ants are called _____.
9. An ants jaws are called _____.
10. Tiny _____ all over an ant's body take in oxygen.

Ant Crossword



Word Bank		
Antarctica	Pheromones	Fire
Mound	Formicary	Metosoma
Mesosoma	Worker	Chamber
Compound	Antennae	Mandibles
	Bullet	

Across

- 5. The one continent where ants are found
- 7. The jaws of an ant
- 9. Chemical signals left by ants for other ants
- 11. Ant who tends the queen, builds the nest and cares for the young
- 12. Ant who causes \$4 billion in damage a year

Down

- 1. Abdomen of an ant
- 2. Thorax of an ant
- 3. Room of an ant nest
- 4. Top of an ant nest
- 5. Used by ants to hear, taste, touch, smell, and communicate
- 6. Eye made of many lenses
- 8. Ant whose sting has been compared to a bullet
- 10. Colony



Ant Word Search

F W D Y T D N R Z L S D T G E
F O T N N R E J E G M D E U Y
X R R U U B A N P E I V L S L
D A O M M O S P T T D M L X Q
N M R A I E P O J A F A U U Z
S F H O S C S M C A A N B K N
N C I X H O A I O D W D G R C
K E B R M T T R Y C Z I K E O
L Q P A E C S F Y K B B H A L
H P H E R O M O N E S L B N O
E K S A L A M O S O S E M N N
A I T R E K R O W O R S O E Y
D N A B D O M E N H D X F T L
A P W R I Q E Q B Q U E E N Q
R D Y B Q U L K L F A F D A S

ABDOMEN
BULLET
COMPOUND
HEAD
MESOSOMA
PHEROMONES
TRAP JAW

ANTARCTICA
CHAMBER
FIRE
LENSES
METOSOMA
QUEEN
WORKER

ANTENNAE
COLONY
FORMICARY
MANDIBLES
MOUND
THORAX

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