

A Little about Ants

By Mimi Jorling

There are lots of different kinds of ants: carpenter ants, leaf-cutter ants, sweet ants, fire ants, and many more. They are different colors, too. They can be red, or brown, or black. Some are very, very small, and some are rather big. Whatever their differences, though, all ants are social creatures. They live in large groups called colonies. Some ant colonies are big and have millions of ants. There are different types of ants in the colony, and they each have different jobs. The queen lays eggs. Soldier ants protect the queen and the colony. They also gather food and attack other colonies if they need new nesting space. Worker ants take care of babies, look for food, and build ant homes (anthills or mounds). Soldier and worker ants are female. Male ants' only job is to mate with the queen in order to produce eggs, which hatch into baby ants.

Ants are busy little insects. It's easy to see them moving quickly here and there. Sometimes you can see them carrying a small piece of something, or dragging part of a leaf somewhere. Sometimes you even see two ants helping each other carry the same crumb. But where are they going and what are they doing? Ants may seem to be just running around, but they are actually important parts of their ecosystem, their world under our feet.

One thing ants do to help their ecosystem is to keep soil healthy. By constantly digging through the soil, they create spaces in it. Soil needs space inside it for air and water. Without air and water in soil, the tiny creatures that live in soil would not survive.

Ants also help bring nutrients to soil. When they bring food particles to their nests, they add nutrients to soil because they don't eat everything they bring. Their leftovers stay in the soil and break down into nutrients for other creatures living in the soil.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the text, what are social creatures that live in large groups called colonies?

- A ants
- B flies
- C grasshoppers
- D beetles

2. What does the author describe in the first paragraph?

- A the importance of ants to their ecosystem
- B the ways in which ants keep soil healthy
- C the food that ants bring to their nests
- D the jobs done by ants in a colony

3. Ants are busy insects. What evidence in the text supports this conclusion?

- A Ants move quickly from one place to another.
- B Male ants' only job is to mate with the queen.
- C Some ants are very, very small, and some are rather big.
- D Ants can be red, or brown, or black.

4. Read these sentences from the text.

"Ants may seem to be just running around, but they are actually important parts of their ecosystem, their world under our feet.

"One thing ants do to help their ecosystem is to keep soil healthy. By constantly digging through the soil, they create spaces in it."

Based on this information, what can you conclude about where the ecosystem of an ant is?

- A The ecosystem of an ant is in the ocean.
- B The ecosystem of an ant is in the air.
- C The ecosystem of an ant is in the soil.
- D The ecosystem of an ant is in the desert.

5. What is a main idea of this text?

- A Ants can be red, brown, or black.
- B Ants are important parts of their ecosystem.
- C Soil needs space inside it for air and water.
- D Sometimes two ants help each other carry the same crumb.

6. Read these sentences from the text.

"Whatever their differences, though, all ants are social creatures. They live in large groups called colonies. Some ant colonies are big and have millions of ants."

What does the author probably mean by writing that ants are "social" creatures?

- A Ants are creatures that help their ecosystem.
- B Ants are creatures that like to spend time with their friends and family.
- C Ants are creatures that work hard and carry things.
- D Ants are creatures that live together in groups.

7. Read this sentence from the text.

"There are lots of different kinds of ants: carpenter ants, leaf-cutter ants, sweet ants, fire ants, and many more."

How could this sentence be rewritten without changing its meaning?

- A There are lots of different kinds of ants, including carpenter ants, leaf-cutter ants, sweet ants, fire ants, and many more.
- B There are lots of different kinds of ants, instead carpenter ants, leaf-cutter ants, sweet ants, fire ants, and many more.
- C There are lots of different kinds of ants, finally carpenter ants, leaf-cutter ants, sweet ants, fire ants, and many more.
- D There are lots of different kinds of ants, next carpenter ants, leaf-cutter ants, sweet ants, fire ants, and many more.

8. What do worker ants do? Include three pieces of information from the text in your answer.

9. Explain how ants help bring nutrients to the soil. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

10. Explain how worker ants help their ecosystem. Support your answer with evidence from the text.
