

Make Your Own Insect

Estimated Time: 30-60 minutes depending on student

SUMMARY

Insects come in all shapes and sizes but they share a number of body structures. Students will learn these features and design an insect of their very own.

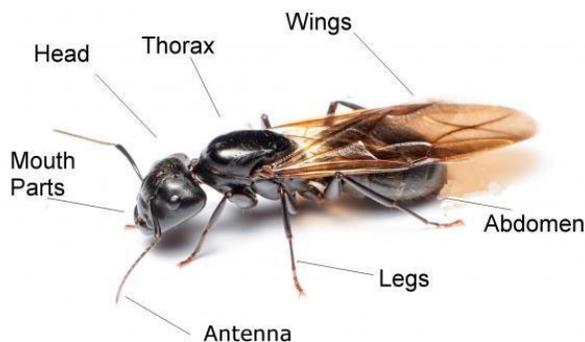
WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- Insects have a head, thorax, abdomen, six legs, and two antennae.

Materials Used	Resources Used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper • Colored pencils, crayons, or markers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wikipedia and other sites for looking at pictures of insects (and other creatures). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insect

WHAT TO DO

1. Look at pictures of insects (or from your observations in the Insect Observation activity). Have your child look for similarities that the insects have. Create a list of those common features that insects share when comparing two different insects. Then, take a look at another insect comparing this new insect to the first two. Add any new common features to the list. Cross out any items that the new insect does not share with the first two. Keeping adding new pictures of insects to the comparison group until your child thinks they have developed a good list of common features.
 - a. Be sure that all pictures are insects or this process can get confused.
2. After coming up with their list of common features, share this image with your child to show them the list used by entomologists (bug scientists) to identify what an insect is (note that not all insects have wings).
3. Once the student has a definition of what an insect is, have them design their own! Their insect should have a head, thorax, abdomen, six legs, two antennae, usually two compound eyes and often a set of wings. From there, creativity should lead the way to create truly unique insects!
 - a. Does your insect have wings? If it does have wings, can it use them to fly or do they serve some other function?
 - b. Does your insect live on land or in the water?
 - c. Does your insect have bright colors for warning or mating or does it have camouflaged colors?



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- d. Does your insect live in colonies or by itself?
- e. How big is your insect? Where does it live?
- f. Most importantly, what is the insect named?

TIPS

- Not everyone is comfortable with insects, but kids look to their teachers and parents for clues on how to react. If you are normally squeamish about insects, pick some that are less “icky” (butterflies, bumblebees, and large beetles often work) and look at the pictures ahead of time so that you can subdue your own reaction and encourage the student to appreciate the diversity of insects.
- For older students, consider comparing insects with arachnids which are very similar. Arachnids have a *cephalothorax* which is one body segment that incorporates what would be the head and the thorax on an insect. They also have eight legs, no antennae, and often some “feeler” legs in front called *pedipalps* (on scorpions these are the pincer arms). Centipedes and millipedes are their own distinct groups, distantly related to both insects and arachnids, and can offer further comparison.
- If working with a group of students, consider having them share their creations and think about what ecosystem could include all of the students’ creations. If possible, create a new picture with all the insects shown (smaller, and with less detail) in the same image interacting with their environment.