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## How Do Crickets Start Their Families?

Crickets may be small, but they have fascinating ways of creating the next generation! Reproduction in crickets involves special behaviors, unique body parts, and a lot of chirping. Let's take a closer look at how crickets start their families.

Male crickets use their famous chirping to attract female crickets. They make this sound by rubbing their wings together, a process called stridulation.

Each species of cricket has a unique chirping song that females can recognize. Once a female hears a song she likes, she moves closer to the male.

When the male and female crickets meet, the male offers the female a spermatophore, which is a tiny packet containing sperm. The female accepts this packet and uses it to fertilize her eggs. After mating, the female cricket finds a safe place to lay her eggs. She uses a special body part called an ovipositor, which looks like a long tail, to deposit her eggs in the soil or inside plants.

A female cricket can lay between 50 and 200 eggs at one time! These eggs stay hidden in their safe spot for about 2 to 4 weeks. During this time, baby crickets, called nymphs, grow inside the eggs. Once they are ready, the nymphs hatch and begin their lives.

Nymphs look like tiny versions of adult crickets, but they don't have wings. They shed their outer skin, or molt, several times as they grow. After about 6 to 8 weeks, nymphs become full-grown crickets. Adult crickets don't take care of their young; once the eggs are laid, the baby crickets are on their own.

Crickets' unique reproductive process helps keep their populations strong. By laying so many eggs, crickets ensure that at least some of their babies will survive, even if predators eat others. This is one of the reasons why crickets are so common in many parts of the world.