

Name _____

How Does a Worm Move?



Worms might not have legs, wings, or fins, but they are excellent movers in their own way. Their movements are slow but effective, helping them navigate underground, in soil, and sometimes even through water.

Worms move by using the **muscles in their bodies**. An earthworm's body is made up of segments, which look like tiny rings. These segments have two sets of muscles. One set makes

the worm's body long and thin, while the other set makes it short and fat. By alternating these muscle movements, worms create a wave-like motion that pushes them forward or backward. This process is called **peristalsis**.

To help them grip the soil, worms use tiny bristles called **setae**. These bristles are located on each segment of the worm's body. When a worm contracts its muscles, the setae grip the soil and prevent it from slipping. This helps the worm move steadily through the earth. You might not see these bristles, but you can sometimes feel them if you gently hold a worm.

Worms are surprisingly strong for their size. They use their muscles to push through compacted soil, creating tunnels as they move. These tunnels are important because they allow air and water to reach plant roots, helping the soil stay healthy.

While most worms crawl through the ground, some species can swim. Aquatic worms move by wriggling their bodies from side to side, much like a snake. This motion allows them to move through water efficiently.

Worms aren't fast movers, but they don't need to be. Their slow, steady movement is perfect for their lifestyle of burrowing and recycling organic matter. Thanks to their efficient techniques, worms play a vital role in keeping soil healthy and ecosystems thriving.