

Snails Discussion Ideas

Snails – come from the mollusk family (invertebrate animals) which include squids, cuttlefish and the octopus. Snails are included in the class of mollusks called gastropod mollusks. Within this class are 3 groups

Sea snails

Freshwater snails

Land snails & slugs

Gastropod comes from the Greek words: *gastro=stomach & podo=foot*. Which means it is a “Stomach-foot”

Basic Features of a Snail

2 pairs of tentacles. The EYESPOTS are on the top pair of tentacles.

The bottom pair are for feeling and smelling.

Snails have a high sense of smell but cannot see very well.

Snails cannot hear.

Snails have a respiratory system (allows them to breathe). If you look carefully you can see its breathing hole at the side of its body.

Snails have a mouth which is pointed downward. This allows it to eat while it travels over a surface.

Inside of its mouth is a tiny tongue called a RADULA. There are 14,175 tiny teeth located on the tongue. Scraps food rather than chews. If you are quiet you can hear them eating.

Shell - grows in a spiral pattern. A snail never loses its shell. The shell grows with them. Made of calcium it gets from eating rocks.

Body of the snails consists of a foot and at the bottom of the foot...the sole. Slugs have a mantle where the shell would be.

The foot is a large muscle. This muscle sends waves of contractions forward from the back of the foot towards the front. This muscle allows them to walk upside down on a vertical surface.

Slime – purpose

Lubricant – allows the snail to move across dry rough surfaces
Prevents the snail from drying out
Protects snail from sharp objects, even the blade of a knife
Protection from predators
Can be made into a mucous like plug that closes off the entrance to the snail's shell during hot & dry climates.

What do they eat?

Snails are mostly HERBIVORES. They eat plants, algae, stems, flowers, decaying plants & soil.

Interesting Facts

Like moist humid environments. They do not like hot dry climates

Nocturnal animals

Hibernate in the cold winter months and live on stored fat.

The slowest creature on earth. Garden snails at top speed go 50 yards per hour.

Important to the food chain. Many animals feed on snails: birds, lightning beetles, snakes, hedgehogs, raccoons & crows.

Land snails can live about 2-3 year but a few species can live up to 5 years.

Snails have a homing instinct up to 40 feet.

Escargot – a delicacy of France

The largest land snail is the GIANT AFRICAN SNAIL. It can grow up to 15 inches long and weigh as much as 2 pounds. Locals in

West Africa eat these snails in a local dish mixed with rice and fish.

The largest land slug in North American is the BANANA slug. It lives in the redwood forest

World's largest Snail is the sea snail called the AUSTRALIAN TRUMPET SNAIL. It can grow up to 30 inches and weigh up to 40 lbs.

Snails are being researched for use in medicines

Snail slime being researched to heal scars

Currently used in beauty products

In France – snail digestive secretion being researched to heal stomach ulcers & bronchitis