

A Touching Experience

Concepts

- Worms respond to touch.
- Some parts of a worm's body are more sensitive to touch than others.
- The banded area of the worm is called the clitellum (klih-TEL-um).

Materials

earthworms
moist paper towel

Description

- 1 Place the worm on the moist paper towel. Observe it for a minute and discuss what it does.
- 2 Very gently, touch the worm on its head, in the middle, and then on its tail. (The worm's tail is the pointed end. The head is closest to the banded area, which is called the clitellum.)
- 3 Talk about which parts of the worm move most actively when touched. Which move the least?
- 4 Repeat several times with different worms to see if you get the same results.

Extensions

Record your results on a graph. One way to do this is to divide the graph into three sections labeled "head," "middle," and "tail." For each worm, mark which part responds most actively to touch. Compare your results for several worms.

Safety

Considerations

As in previous worm activities, the main safety issue in worm experiments is for the worm. If we are to expose children to living creatures, we must model respect. Young children need to be closely supervised while handling fragile living beings such as worms. Be careful not to leave the worms out so long that the paper dries out, because the worms will too.

