# INVERTEBRATES

Invertebrates are animals without backbones. Common types include insects, spiders, crustaceans, annelids (worms) and molluscs.

## ENVIRONMENT AND BEHAVIOUR

They are found in every habitat in the world and have diverse body shapes, sizes, needs, lifecycles and behaviours. In Australia, there are over 200,000 species of invertebrates but only approximately 10,000 of them have been documented fully.

The study of invertebrates can be a useful addition to student learning, as they are naturally fascinating and can generally be closely observed. Invertebrates can be observed in their natural environment in backyards, classrooms, schoolyards and local parks. They may also be kept in the classroom where students can develop an understanding of the animals’ specific environmental and biological needs, behaviour, reproduction and growth.

Invertebrates cannot be taken from the wild and kept as pets. It is permissible to remove animals temporarily for short periods of observation but they must be returned to their habitat promptly. It is important to note that some species of invertebrates are endangered and should not be removed from the wild under any circumstances.

Invertebrates commonly kept in classrooms or used in teaching activities include:

* freshwater crayfish (including marron and yabbies)
* hermit/crazy crabs
* earthworms
* insects: ants, cockroaches, silkworms, mealworms, stick insects, butterflies and moths
* molluscs: snails
* arachnids: spiders, scorpions, ticks and mites
* single-celled animals: paramecium, euglena.

Invertebrates are vary widely in form and in their care and housing requirements. If you are planning to keep invertebrates in the classroom, it is important to consult reference material with regard to their husbandry. As with all animals used in classrooms, before acquiring invertebrates an acceptable fate plan must be in place for when they are no longer required.

VSAEC recommends that schools:

* maintain the environment as close as to the invertebrates’ natural habitats as possible
* return the animals to their natural setting after use if practicable
* purchase organisms from reputable suppliers rather than taking them from their natural settings
* use as few as are necessary to meet teaching and learning objectives
* encourage observational work in natural habitats or settings.

## More information

* [Australian Museum Online Fact sheets](https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/animals/)
* [Museum Victoria](https://museumvictoria.com.au/)
* [MiniBeasts - Travelling Mobile Mini-Beast Education](http://www.mini-beasts.com/)
* [Australian Insect Farm](http://www.insectfarm.com.au/)
* [Western Australian Museum](http://museum.wa.gov.au/)

Kindly sourced from the [SAEC – Schools Animal Ethics Committee of Western Australia](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculumsupport/animalethics/detcms/portal/)