

# Comparing and Contrasting Vertebrates and Invertebrates

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**Read the informational text and complete the graphic organizer. (Answers may vary.)**

All animals eat, breathe, grow, and reproduce. They also respond to stimuli and have a definite life span. But not all animals are alike. Based on their similarities and differences, animals can be classified into vertebrates and invertebrates.

**Vertebrates** are animals that have a backbone. The backbone is a column of bones that supports the body and protects the spinal cord. Their well-developed internal skeleton enables vertebrates to move fast, and most vertebrates have two pairs of limbs. The five major groups of vertebrates are fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. They also have a highly developed brain, nervous system, circulatory system, respiratory system, and cells to cover the outside of their body. Vertebrates tend to be large as compared to invertebrates. Some vertebrates give birth while some lay eggs. Vertebrates live in various habitats but can accommodate more easily than invertebrates.

**Invertebrates** don't have a backbone, nor do they have a well-developed internal skeleton or internal systems. They either have a soft body, like worms and jellyfish, or a hard outer casing called an exoskeleton covering their body, like spiders and insects. Due to the lack of muscular and skeletal systems, invertebrates are small, and they move slowly. All invertebrates lay eggs. Invertebrates are classified into many groups, seven of which are: the annelids, platyhelminths, sponges, echinoderms, cnidarians, mollusks, and arthropods. Invertebrates are found in all habitats, but they generally have a hard time adapting to a habitat that is out of their own.

Remarkably, the majority of the two million species of animals in the world are invertebrates, and only a small percentage of them account for vertebrates.

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