

Will an Antlion Build its Pit Here?

Scientific Background

Antlions build pits in loose, sandy soil. They are adapted to dig in this type of soil, which may be found around wooded dunes, on open forest floors, and near dry, tree-lined river banks. Sometimes antlions are found in the sandy soil of flowerbeds or in overgrown city lots. Antlions hunt small insects as their prey. These types of sandy environments allow an antlion to build a pit that serves as an excellent trapping device for its prey. Insects such as ants fall into the pit. The sandy walls of the pit make it difficult for the antlion's prey to escape.

Vocabulary

- abdomen
- jaws
- predator
- soil
- inject
- larva
- prey

*Vocabulary definitions can be found in the **Backyard Bugs** Glossary.*

Thinking Question

What conditions are necessary for an antlion to build a pit? Why?

Exploratory and Extension Activities

Additional Exploratory and Extension activities are available in the *Backyard Bugs Teacher's Guide*.

Antlion Dance





Have students form a large circle. Have the circle face the center then turn the students to face right. Each student will put both hands on the next student's shoulders. Explain that the antlion makes a trap by walking backward in a circular motion, making smaller and smaller circles. Have them practice walking backward slowly. Use music such as *The Circle of Life* by Elton John, *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush*, or other circle-themed music. Have students walk backward until they are clustered in a tight clump.

Original Antlion Songs





Have students create antlion lyrics to the tunes of familiar songs. Refer to the **Backyard Bugs** Teacher's Guide for suggested lyrics to be sung to *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* and *Johnny Comes Marching Home*.

Name: _____

Will an Antlion Build Its Pit Here?

	Yes	No	Why or why not?
 <p>Grass</p>			
 <p>Asphalt Road</p>			
 <p>Fine Sand</p>			
 <p>Muddy, Wet Ground</p>			

Answer Key
Will an Antlion Build Its Pit Here?

	Yes	No	Why or why not?
 Grass		√	<p>Suggested answer: An antlion cannot build its pit in grass or wet soil. It needs to build its pit in sand or dry dirt.</p>
 Asphalt Road		√	<p>Suggested answer: An antlion cannot build its pit on a solid asphalt road. It needs to build its pit in sand or dry dirt.</p>
 Fine Sand	√		<p>Suggested answer: An antlion builds a pit in sand or dry soil.</p>
 Muddy, Wet Ground		√	<p>Suggested answer: An antlion cannot build its pit in muddy, wet ground. It needs to build its pit in sand or dry dirt.</p>