

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# About Mealworms

## What is a mealworm?

A mealworm is not really a worm at all. It's an insect. Actually, it's a darkling beetle that hasn't grown up yet.

Darkling beetles have four stages of life. They begin their life as an egg. When they hatch, they spend several months as a larva called a mealworm. Next they'll turn into a pupa, which is a stage where they cannot crawl or eat. Finally, they'll turn into adult beetles.

## Do mealworms smell gross? Are they filled with germs?

Mealworms are clean and odorless. They're not slimy and, compared to other animals, they're not very germey. However, you will still want to wash your hands after handling them.

## What do mealworms eat?

Mealworms can be found in Cheerios and other dry cereals.

Be careful not to eat too much sugar can be harmful to them.



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## Do they need water?

All animals do need some water, but mealworms don't need very much. They like a dry habitat. Instead of giving them a dish of water, you should give them foods that have water in them. A few small bits of potato or carrot should provide your mealworms with all of the water they need.

## Where do I keep my mealworms?

If you only have a few mealworms, you may want to keep your them in a small, plastic Tupperware container. Use a pin to poke a lots of tiny holes in the top so fresh air can get in. Don't make the holes too big, or your mealworms could escape.

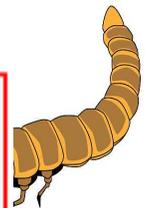
If you have lots of mealworms, you may want to keep them in a 10-gallon, glass aquarium. If you do this, you won't need to place a lid on top because the mealworms won't be able to climb up the glass sides.

## Four Stages of a Darkling Beetle's Life

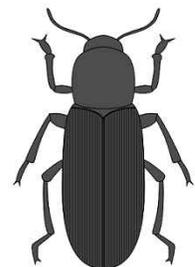
### Stage 1: Egg



### Stage 2: Larva (Mealworms)



### Stage 4: Adult (Darkling Beetle)



## How do I prepare the home for my mealworms?

Fill the bottom of your container with bran or oats, an inch or two deep. You'll find that the mealworms like to bury themselves in food. Also place a few carrot slices or potato slices in there too.

Keep your mealworms' home away from bright lights and windows. Indirect light is best for their survival. Just lay your mealworm habitat on a quiet shelf and they should be very happy.

## Can I touch them or move them?

Be very gentle with your mealworms because you don't want to harm them. The best way to pick them up is with a plastic spoon. You could also use plastic tweezers to pick them up, if you're gentle.

## How do I take care of them?

If you start to see lots of round beads (waste), it is time to change the food. Take your mealworms out of the habitat and replace the bottom of their home with fresh bran or oats.

Also, change the carrots and potato bits every couple of days so they don't get too dry or moldy.

## Will my mealworms become adults?

The mealworms will have legs, but they will be becoming adults.

After the pupa stage, they will have changed their shape and color. They will be in a separate habitat. They'll eat the same oats and bran they did as larva.



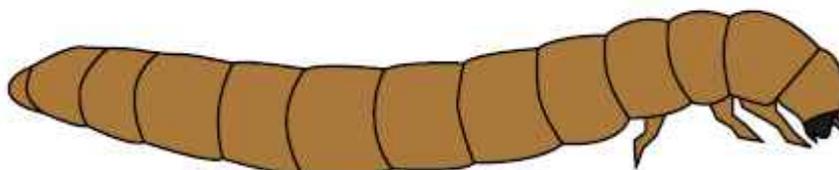
They will wiggle their legs when they are

They will have changed their shape and color when they are in a separate habitat.

Adult beetles may lay eggs. The eggs are very tiny and you may not be able to see them easily. If you wait a week or two, new mealworms will hatch from the eggs and the cycle will start again.

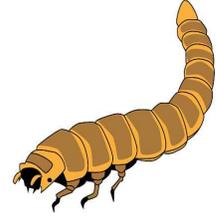
The chart below shows how long they may stay in each stage:

| Stage            | Time       |
|------------------|------------|
| egg              | 4-18 days  |
| larva (mealworm) | 6-9 months |
| pupa             | 6-18 days  |
| adult            | 2-3 months |



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Caring for Mealworms



1. A mealworm is...
  - a. a dry, brown worm
  - b. a beetle in the pupa stage
  - c. a type of worm with legs
  - d. a darkling beetle in the larval stage
2. The best way to pick up mealworms is....
  - a. with your fingers
  - b. with a spoon
  - c. with two pencils
  - d. You should never pick up mealworms.
3. What do mealworms eat?
  - a. fresh grass and leaves
  - b. twigs and bark
  - c. other insects
  - d. cereal

4. Which of the following is a good food for mealworms?
  - a. fresh grass and leaves
  - b. twigs and bark
  - c. other insects
  - d. cereal



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5. Why should you add a carrot or potato to your mealworm's habitat?

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6. Bob is worried that his mealworm is sick because it looks shriveled up. It cannot walk or move, but it does wiggle its legs a little. Megan tells Bob not to worry. She says the mealworm is not sick.

Explain why Megan thinks the mealworm will be okay.

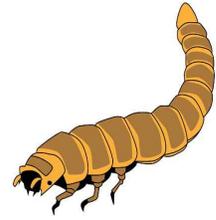
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# ANSWER KEY

## Caring for Mealworms



1. A mealworm is... **d**
  - a. a dry, brown worm
  - b. a beetle in the pupa stage
  - c. a type of worm with legs
  - d. **a darkling beetle in the larval stage**
2. The best way to pick up mealworms is.... **b**
  - a. with your fingers
  - b. **with a spoon**
  - c. with two pencils
  - d. You should never pick up mealworms.
3. What do mealworms eat? **d**
  - a. fresh grass and leaves
  - b. twigs and bark

4. Which of the following is a good food for mealworms?

a.  
b.  
c.

A red-bordered box containing a cartoon superhero character flying through the air. To the right of the character, the word "PREVIEW" is written in large, bold, red letters with a shadow effect. Below "PREVIEW", the text reads: "Please log in or register to download the printable version of this worksheet." The entire box is set against a white background.

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5. Why should you add a carrot or potato to your mealworm's habitat?

**The mealworm can get water from the carrot or potato.**

6. Bob is worried that his mealworm is sick because it looks shriveled up. It cannot walk or move, but it does wiggle its legs a little. Megan tells Bob not to worry. She says the mealworm is not sick.

Explain why Megan thinks the mealworm will be okay.

**Megan knows that the mealworm has probably entered into pupa stage. Soon it will be an adult beetle.**