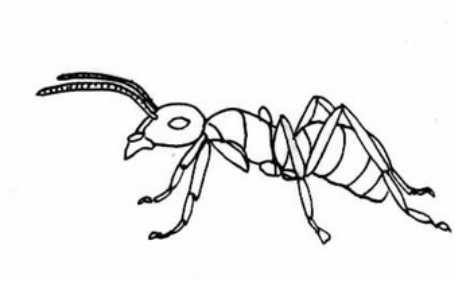
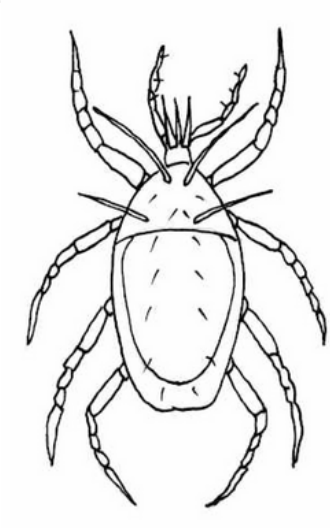
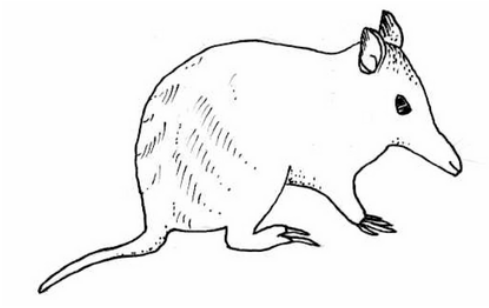
Soil organisms in food chains

Print and cut out each card.

Ant 	The tunnels in our nests help to loosen the soil. This makes the soil less hard and compact, so water can easily move through the soil. We like to **consume** dead plants and other insects. Bigger insects, amphibians, birds and mammals like to **eat** us!

Mite 	We like to **consume** dead organic matter in the soil. We're pretty small, so hard to see, but other small animals can see us and like to eat us. The animals that **eat** most of us are nematodes.

Bandicoot

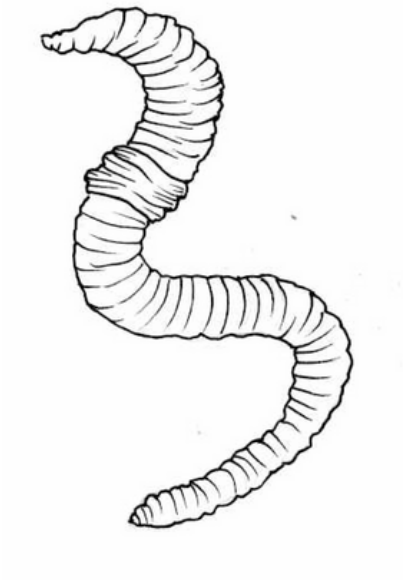


We like to dig burrows in the soil. This helps to keep the air in the soil, which makes the soil less compact and helps water to travel through the soil.

We like to **consume** roots, fungi, worms and insects in the soil. There aren't any things under the ground that will eat us, but above ground, it's a different story (quolls, cats, foxes and human development are all big threats to us).

When we die, our bodies will eventually be **decomposed** by bacteria, insects and other soil organisms, and we will become part of the soil.

Earthworm

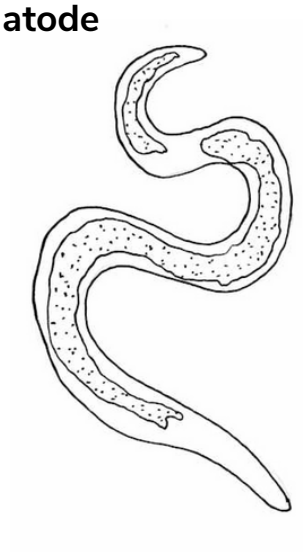


We like to **consume** dead plants; the poo we make from eating these plants is full of nutrients and goes into the soil. The plants **absorb** these nutrients.

The tunnels that we make keep air moving through the soil, which makes the soil less compact, and helps water to travel through the soil.

We have to be careful sticking our heads up out of the soil because birds like to **eat** us!

Nematode

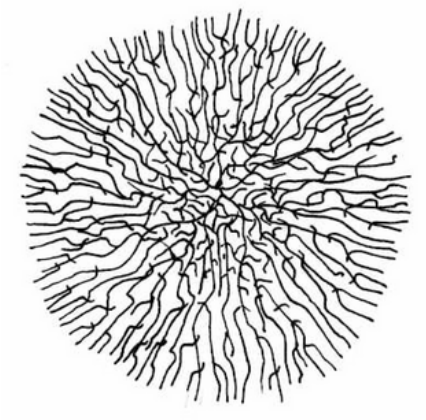


We like to **consume** mites, fungi and bacteria.

We need water in the soil because that's where we live - in the thin layers of water that surround soil particles!

We might be **eaten** by other nematodes or by small insects.

Ant



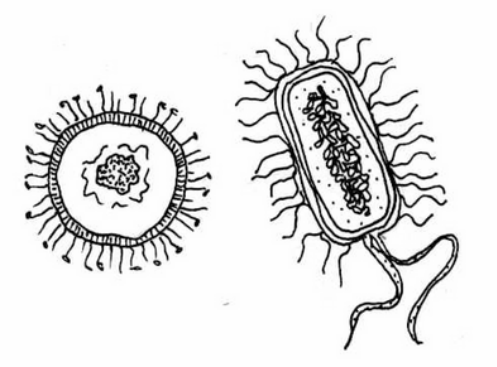
There are different types of fungi in the soil.

Some of us help to **decompose** hard-to-digest organic matter (like wood).

Some of us help plants to **absorb nutrients** from the soil by working with the plant roots.

Some of us help hold the soil together, which makes it easier for the soil to retain water.

Bacteria

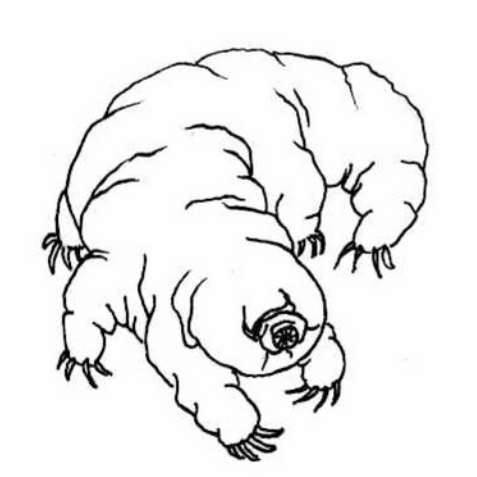


We are tiny creatures, yet we are so important to the soil!

We **decompose** dead plant material and take nutrients that other organisms have released, and we move them around the soil so that the soil is a healthy place for plants to grow (the plants love to **absorb** these nutrients!).

We are **eaten** by nematodes and fungi.

Tardigrade



We like to **consume** fungi, plant roots, bacteria, and nematodes, and we help to **decompose** these things to make them easier to eat for other organisms.

The bad news is that some nematodes also like to **eat** us! Also, some types of tardigrades will also **eat** other types of tardigrades!

Like nematodes, we need water in the soil because that's where we live - in the thin layers of water that surround soil particles.

Plant	We grow in the soil! We provide plant materials that soil organisms **decompose**. Our roots help to keep the soil stable by stopping the wind and rain from carrying the soil away (this is one type of erosion). Most of us have roots that help to bring air into the soil, and this helps the water to move through the soil. We **absorb** nutrients from the soil, and we **produce** our own energy through photosynthesis.