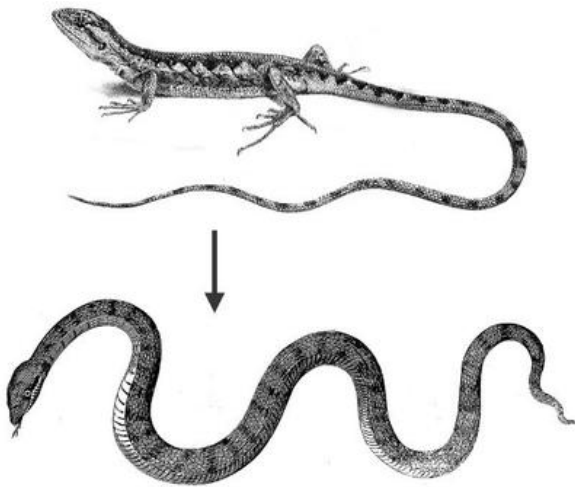




WHY DON'T SNAKES HAVE LEGS? THEY DON'T NEED THEM!



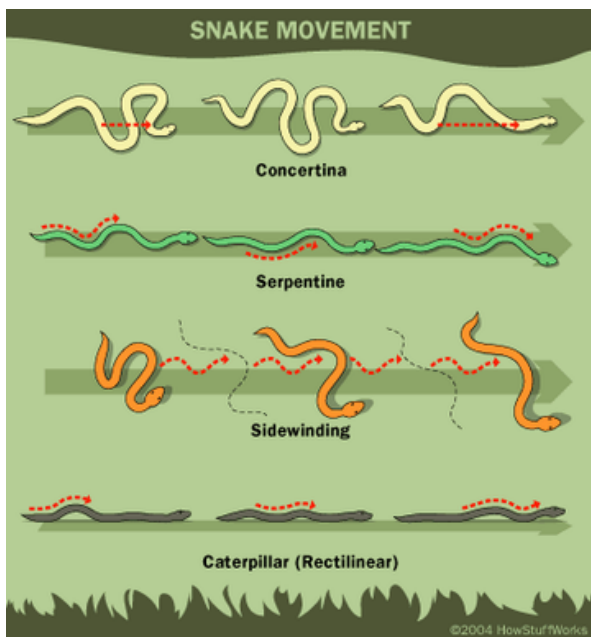
Evolution is the process by which plants or animals change physical shape over generations in order to live more efficiently in their environment. Early humans evolved by walking on two legs, instead of four. Snakes also slowly evolved, and no longer have legs because they developed other ways to move.

Millions of years ago the ancestors of snakes were lizards, part of a group of animals called reptiles. Over time, these lizards began moving differently, depending less on their legs. Today's snakes use their abdominal muscle (the muscles located under your stomach) to move across the ground, to grip things, and to climb. They are still in the reptile family.

We can even SEE evidence of evolution on the bodies of some snakes. They are called vestigial legs, tiny leg-like hooks that no longer serve a purpose on the snake's body, but show where the snake's legs used to be. They are proof that snakes once had legs!



Vestigial Legs



Even without legs, snakes don't all move the same way. Some climb trees, some dig underground, and some can even move quickly through the sand! Snakes abdominal muscles stretch down through most of their body, making them very strong and allowing them to move in many different ways.