



SNAKES ARE FLEXIBLE – ARE YOU??

Lets compare snakes to people!



Did you know that if you were a snake, you could swallow a whole watermelon?

- Open your mouth as wide as you can. Snakes are able to open their mouths wide in two directions -- up and down AND side to side.
- Find your chin. Snakes have a stretchy muscle to hold their bottom jaw together, so they are able open their bottom jaw out to either side.
- Feel the muscles connecting your upper and lower jaws by putting your fingers under your ears while opening and closing your mouth. Snakes have a double-hinge on the back of their mouths so they can open their jaws much wider than humans can.
- Stick out your tongue and look in the mirror. Snakes have a split or forked tongue that helps them find food by “tasting” the air to locate their prey.
- When you eat, your teeth are used to chew food before swallowing. Snakes use their teeth to pull the food into their mouth, then they swallow it whole.

Stretching

- Stretch as far as you can to one side and then the other (without falling over). Stretch backwards and then forward. Do you know what is in your body that allows you to move like this? The answer is a backbone or vertebrae!
- Humans have 33 vertebrae, but snakes have 200 – 400 vertebrae depending upon the species so they are much more flexible than people.

How do snakes move without legs?

- Feel the sides of your body to find your ribs and take some deep breaths. Do you feel how your ribs move in and out? Humans have 24 ribs, but snakes have one rib for every vertebra. That's a lot of ribs!
- Snakes slither! In snakes, each rib moves independently and is attached to a scale on their bellies. This helps them push off against the ground to move.
- Time for a snake race! Try to get from one side of the room to the other while lying on your stomach, without using your hands, feet, elbows, shoulders, knees, or hips. Can you do it? How far you get?

Take a close look at the snake skeleton and skull below. What do parts do you notice? Do you have similar body parts?

