

Spider Webs

Discussion Questions:



- 1) Do all spiders use webs to trap prey?
- 2) What other purposes do spiders have for making silk?
- 3) What are the most common types of spider webs?

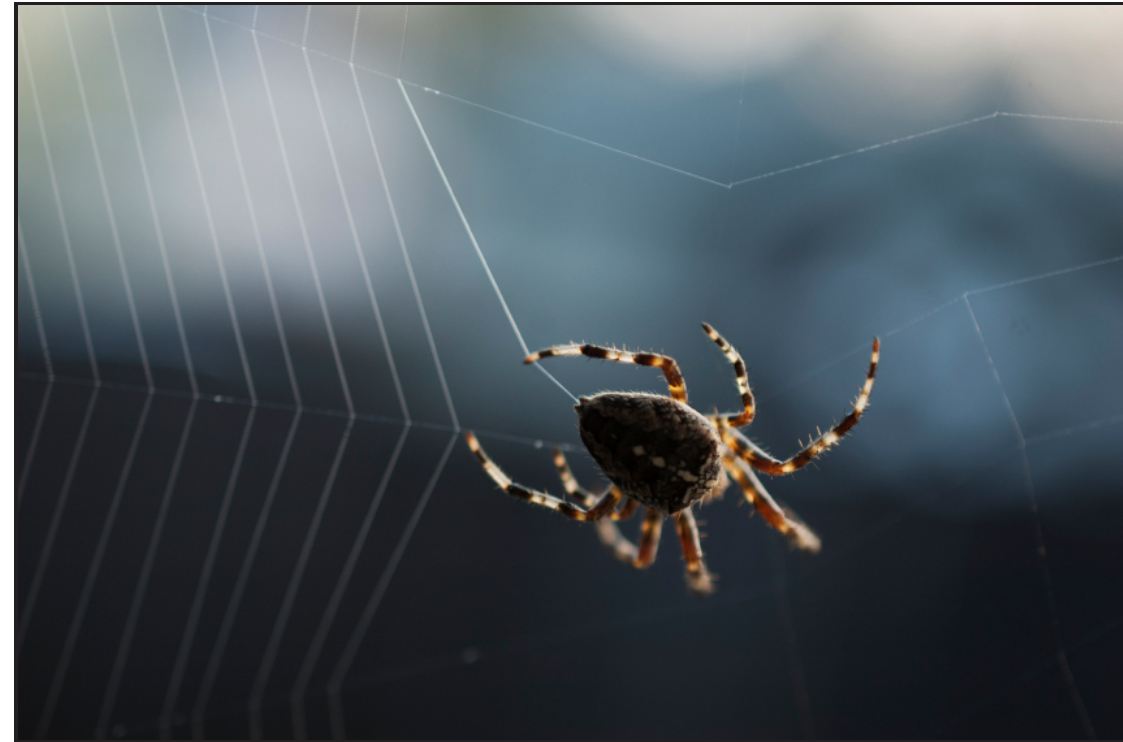
Why do spiders spin webs?

Spiders produce silk in special glands in their abdomen called spinnerets. They use this silk in many different ways and are able to vary the type of silk they spin for different purposes.

Webs provide spiders with a means of trapping prey. Different species of spiders build different types of webs. Parts of their web may be made of finer or stickier silk that will easily trap prey. Spiders are able to feel the vibrations of their prey's movement through the strands of the web. (Some spiders don't use a web to catch prey. They wander the environment and hunt instead.)

Spiders use silk for other purposes too. They spin silk to wrap around their prey as a means of food storage and they make protective egg sacs for their offspring using silk.

Silk also helps them move about. They can quickly produce a silk rope to help them escape danger. Many spiderlings also use a fine silk thread as a parachute to safely transport them through the air.

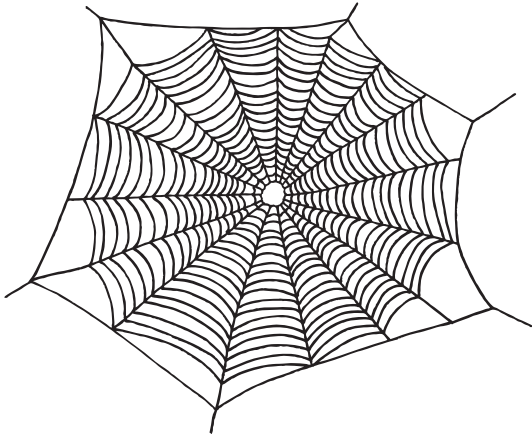


Spiders produce silk in their spinnerets.

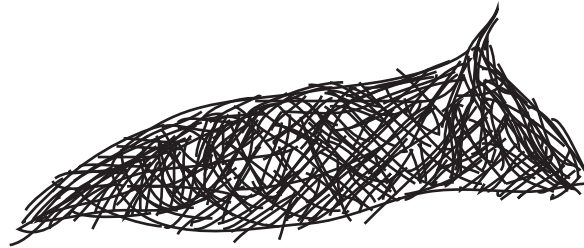


Spiders use their silk for food storage.

What types of webs do spiders spin?



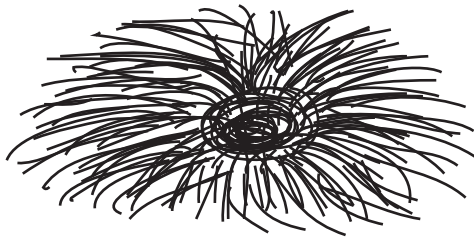
Orb



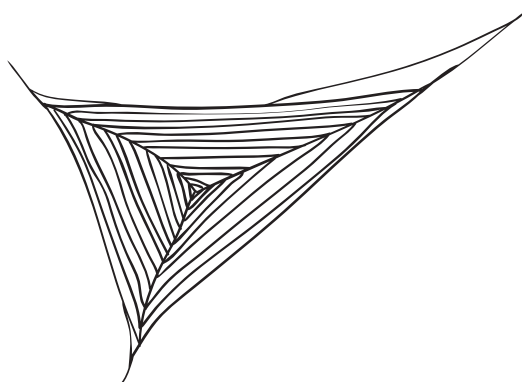
Tangle
(Cob webs)



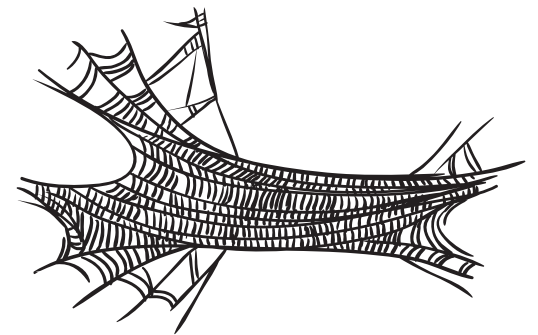
Sheet



Funnel



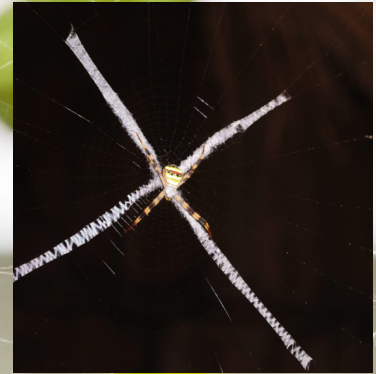
Triangular



Tube

Orb Webs

Many different species of spiders build this type of web. Some also build amazing zigzag designs into their webs. The spider pictured below is in the process of making a large zigzag patterned cross in the middle of its web. Perhaps the design acts as a form of camouflage or protection from the sun. The spider sits at the centre of the cross with legs in pairs, waiting for prey to become entangled in its web.





Funnel Webs

Like a funnel, these types of webs are wide at the surface with a narrow tunnel at the centre. These types of webs are often built at the entrance to an underground burrow. The spider waits inside the burrow and rushes out to grab prey when they feel vibrations on the web.

Funnel web spiders like cool moist conditions and can be found amongst leaf litter, in crevices between rocks and bushes. Some species are venomous to humans.



Tangle Webs (cobwebs)

Tangle webs, also known as cobwebs, are made by many species of spiders. They can be found in gardens, on fences, in and around buildings and amongst the branches of trees.

The strands of the web don't follow a set pattern. They cross-cross over each other, looking like a tangled mess! Creatures that stumble into a tangle web are easily trapped in the sticky strands.



Tangle web strands criss-cross over each other in no particular pattern. Some tangle webs can be found in small crevices in your house and garden. Other tangle webs are long and stretch across wide areas. Examples can be seen in roof areas and amongst tree branches.





Sheet Webs

Sheet webs look like a sheet has been draped over bushes or suspended between branches. The base is thick like a trampoline and fine strands of web criss cross above.

The spider hides under the thick sheet. When prey fly into the thin threads they fall down into the sheet below them. Then the spider then rushes out to capture the prey.





Hunting Spiders

Not all spiders build webs to catch prey. Some spiders are hunters and wander the environment looking for prey. But these spiders still use silk to make protective egg sacs.

Hunting spiders are quick moving spiders. Some of the more well known species include tarantulas, wolf spiders and the Australian Huntsman spider.

