COMMONLIT

Name: _____ Class: _____

# Ant-tastic Teamwork!

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*In this informational text, Marie Droual teaches readers about the interesting world of ants.*

***As you read, take notes on how ants work together.***

[1] Picture a summer day: you, your family and friends are in the park enjoying the warm weather. You play some soccer, a little frisbee, then settle down to a delicious picnic. You open the food only to discover that ants have found it first! They're crawling everywhere. You try to brush them off, but it's too late. These small insects are often seen as a nuisance or pests, unwelcome to any gathering or home. But they are actually fascinating creatures that are a lot more complicated[1] than they naturally appear. Behind the chaos[2] is a careful organization[3] of roles and responsibilities. Let's dig a little deeper and learn more about them.

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## Ants, ants everywhere

Ants have been around for millions of years. They were found in fossils[4] over 100 million years old! They are a type of insect. An easy way to identify[5] an insect is based on the number of legs they have. All insects have six legs. There are over 12,000 different species of ants. Across these species, there are lots of different shapes, sizes, and appearances. There are the harmless but smelly house ants that release a sour smell when squashed. The fire ants have a scary reputation for their sting. In Central America, there are ants called bullet ants. They are called this because their sting is so painful, it is like getting shot! Turtle ants have large, dish-like heads that can be used to block predators[6] from getting into the nest. We are only scratching the surface when it comes to the different types of ants, as there are so many!

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1. difficult to understand
2. **Chaos** ***(noun)*** lack of order
3. order
4. the remains of a living thing from an earlier time, found in earth or rock
5. **Identify** ***(verb)*** to figure out what something is
6. an animal that hunts and eats other animals

## Amazing structures[7] built by ants

Ants are impressive in many ways, but especially in their strength. A single ant can carry 50 times its body weight. That would be like a 50-pound child picking up 2,500 pounds. That's more than the average weight of a moose or bison! However, when ants work together their feats[8] are even more incredible. Fire ants have been seen making large rafts made of their own bodies during floods in the south of the U.S. Another species of ants, army ants, will use their bodies to create a hanging, temporary[9] nest where they can protect themselves and raise their young. You can see these hanging structures in Central American forests.

The structures that ants make inspire[10] people to learn more about how they create them. There are engineers who study ants to learn more about the details of these structures. They study these structures to hopefully mimic[11] them in the form of robots or bridges.

## Teamwork is key

[5] The key behind the ants' amazing feats are communication and organization. Ants are a social animal species, meaning they live together in communities containing thousands of ants. Within these communities, or colonies, ants are organized into specific groups. Just like you might be divided up into teams to complete a larger task, ants organize themselves into teams. Each team has a specific role. Some ants will take care of the brood — those ants that are still developing into full-grown ants. Other ants will defend the colony against attackers. Every colony has what's known as the queen ant. She makes up her own team, as the producer of eggs. Working together, each ant has a role in keeping the colony alive and well. As strong as an individual ant is on their own, together they are powerful.

## Lending a helping...tarsus?[12]

Just because ants are strong, it doesn't mean that they don't take care of one another. In some species, ants have been seen to display[13] selfless behavior. A species commonly known as paramedic ants will go on raids to capture prey to eat. During these raids, ants will get injured. Rather than leaving them behind, other ants will bring the hurt ants back to the colony where they can recover and get better. This way, they can rejoin the other ants in these raids. Paramedic ants are just one example of ant species that look out for one another. They do this because they know that they are stronger together than individually. That is why they will risk their own lives to save their nest-mates, those ants who belong to the same colony.

Whether they are lifting something 50 times their weight or saving nest-mates, ants are an incredible animal. Maybe next time ants invade your picnic, take some time to take a look at them. Watch how they touch one

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7. **Structures** ***(noun)*** **things that have been built**
8. **Feat** ***(noun)*** an action of great skill or strength
9. for a short time
10. **Inspire** ***(verb)*** to cause someone to want to do something
11. copy
12. **a body part of an ant**
13. **Display** ***(verb)*** to make known

another to communicate and, of course, lift heavy pieces of your food.