

# Flatworms: The First Hunter Fact Sheet

The phylum is called platyhelminthes, which comes from the Greek meaning 'flat worm.'

Flatworms are bilaterally symmetrical with a defined head and tail region and a centralized nervous system containing a brain and nerve cords—a body plan that provided them with the tools to become “the first hunters.” This bilateral body plan was inherited by most of the phyla that followed.

Flatworms include: freshwater planaria, marine flatworms, and parasitic tapeworms and flukes.

## Features of the Phylum

- Bilaterally symmetrical with a head, a tail and stereo senses
- Centralized nervous system
- Three tissue layers
- No coelom (body cavity), no circulatory system, and no hard skeleton

## Key words and concepts

Parasite: organism living in or on another species getting its food from the tissues or fluids of its host.

Cilia: a hair-like growth from a cell that, when present in large numbers, can produce currents to move water and/or propel an animal across a carpet of a mucus slime.

Stereo senses: paired senses (like ears and eyes) that are on both sides of the head allowing an object to be accurately located in space.

Pharynx: a tube that the flatworm pushes out of its body in order to feed.

Hermaphrodite: an organism that produces both female and male sex cells.

Bilateral symmetry: a body form with a central longitudinal plane that divides the body into two halves that mirror each other.