

BSE 51901

Scorpions





The night is dark and still, but the desert floor is *alive!* Everywhere, eight-legged creatures are in search of their next meal: insects, spiders, small lizards—even each other. Some go on the prowl while others

lie in wait to ambush their prey. They're scorpions, doing what scorpions have been doing since before the age of the dinosaurs.

Scorpions are **arachnids**, which means they have eight legs, just like spiders and ticks. There are about 2,000 species of scorpions, and they're found on every continent but Antarctica. Most scorpions live in deserts, but they can also live in forests, on mountains, along seashores, in caves, and even in people's homes!

With its stinger held high, this scorpion is ready to strike. If it creeps you out, you're not alone. But are these creatures as scary as people think?



The Fear Factor

Many people are afraid of scorpions, and you can't really blame them. The bad reputation most likely comes from a scorpion's fierce-looking **pincers** and stinging tail.



Tri-colored scorpion

Scorpions use their pincers to quickly grab prey. They then whip their poisonous tail stinger over to kill or paralyze their prey. The tail can also be used to defend itself against predators!

You can see that the *tri-colored scorpion* above has caught a *koringkriek* with its pincers. A scorpion may then strike its prey with the stinger on the tip of its tail (see close-up). The sting delivers a shot of venom. The venom paralyzes the prey so it can't escape. Then the scorpion will tear it to bite-sized bits—good food for a hungry hunter!

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