

# Exoskeleton

Glossary – Exoskeleton:

A rigid external covering for the body of insects

All insects have a hard outer skin which protects and supports the insects' soft body tissues. This outer skin also provides an attachment for muscles and determines the insects' appearance; such as pairs of limbs and a segmented body; left and right sides look alike in bilateral symmetry.



Above: STICK INSECTS

All stick insects shed their exoskeleton as they grow. But once they reach maturity (able to breed) they cease to shed their exoskeleton anymore. This is so for the majority of insects. This stick insect (above) has just crawled out of its old skin which can be seen at the rear of the insects' body.

Above: Burrowing cockroach

The burrowing cockroach *Macropanesthia rhinoceros* is very different. It matures and has babies at age 4 years. This means they are adult insects yet they continue to shed their exoskeleton, getting larger and larger. The largest roach we have ever bred was 9 cm. The white roach in the above image has just shed its' exoskeleton.