

Activity

DO SOME VERMICOMPOSTING

Red wiggler worms can eat your leftover garbage, turning it into rich soil to use in the garden. Be sure to keep your worm box in a place that's warm and dark.

Caution: Have an adult help with cutting the plastic bottle.

➤ **Cut a few inches off the top of a 2-liter bottle and put the top aside for later.** Tear or cut several pages of newspaper into strips about an inch wide. This is bedding material for your worms, and they'll break this down, too. Put some into the bottom of the bottle and lightly spritz it with water. You want it damp, but not soaking wet, or the worms will drown. Fill your bottle about half full with these fluffed up, damp newspaper strips.

➤ **Add a cup of soil and toss that with the newspaper.** Put your worms into their container, and when they've moved down away from the light, add some kitchen scraps and place a shallow layer of newspaper bedding material on top.

➤ **Poke several good-sized holes in the top of the bottle,** and tape it on top, either in an upright position or upside-down, whichever is more convenient for you. You need to be sure that enough air circulates inside your bottle.

DID YOU KNOW?

The red wiggler worm is most often employed in composting bins. It's different from your average earthworm—it loves rotting vegetation and compost but doesn't do too well in "regular" soil. Your average earthworm, on the other hand, loves plain old soil!

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➤ **You'll want to keep your vermicomposter out of the light.** Lay black construction paper out on a table. Cut out a few window flaps so you can see inside—but cut around only three sides of the windows. This way you can close the flaps when you're not observing your worms. When you're finished creating windows, wrap the construction paper around the bottle tightly and tape it securely.

➤ **Check regularly to make sure that the bedding stays just barely moist.** The worms will work on the food scraps and turn them into compost. Add new scraps as they break down.

➤ **If you're going to maintain your vermicomposter for a long time, you'll need to remove the compost after a while.** You can lure the worms to one side of your container by putting their food on one side, waiting a day or so for them to move over, then scooping up the compost. Replace the compost with fresh bedding. Also, keep an eye on the moisture in the bin. If it's getting too wet, poke a couple of small holes (too small for your worms to crawl out of!) in the bottom of the bin and set it in a saucer or container to catch any drips.

Red wigglers enjoy these foods.

- coffee grounds
- fruit
- vegetables
- egg shells
- used tea bags

Red wigglers don't enjoy these foods.

- meat and fish
- dairy products
- bread
- banana peels and oranges
- non-foods such as plastic

Think About It

What other natural ways are there to facilitate organic composting? How do you see composting happen in nature, on its own? Would it be possible for humans to do something similar?