



## Learning at Home Zoo Med Assignment: 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade

# “In My Own Back Yard”

Even if they are very tiny, creatures are all around us and play important roles in our environment. One type of creature that is easy to find and fun to learn about are Isopods (AKA: Roly-Polies, Sow Bugs and Pill Bugs.) For this assignment, we will show you how to make an “Isopod Habitat” with items you already have at home! You can then observe your new pets and share with us what you learned.

### Materials:

- Container that allows for air circulation (Jar, plastic box, etc...)
- Soil
- Dry leaves
- Rotting wood
- Moss
- Water

### Steps:

1. Clean your container with water.
2. Carefully poke holes into your container or lid.
3. Add soil, leaves, rotting wood, and moss.
4. Find Isopods and add them to your jar!
5. Add water when necessary to make a damp substrate.

After you have set up your habitat, make observations of your Isopods and answer these questions:

1. What type of habitat did you find your Isopods in? Can you describe the biome?

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2. Identify the species of Isopod you found. Did you find more than one species?

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3. Conduct an experiment: Provide a variety of foods to your Isopods. What type do you hypothesize they will like best? Describe your experiment here and tell us what you learned:

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# FUN ISOPOD FACTS

- Isopods are not actually bugs. They are crustaceans like lobsters and shrimp.
- While some other crustaceans may spend some short amounts of time on land, Isopods are the only LAND crustacean. (However there are many species of aquatic Isopods too!)
- Isopods can live about 2 years.
- Most Isopods are nocturnal and most active at night.
- Isopods have 7 pairs of jointed legs, but babies are born with only 6 pairs.
- There are over 10,000 species of Isopod found throughout the world. Over 4,000 species occupy terrestrial habitats.
- Their diet largely consists of rotting vegetation. They are important decomposers!
- Mothers carry eggs in a pouch called a marsupium – after they hatch, they stay in the pouch with their mother for several days before leaving
- They are important for ridding the soil of heavy metal ions by taking in copper, zinc, lead, arsenic, and cadmium which they crystallize in their midgut. They can survive in contaminated soil where other species can't!

