

MAGIC MAILBOX

Ever wonder what kind of animal a cricket is? Crickets are insects, just like ants. That means they have 6 legs and 3 body parts. Crickets are jumping insects, but they also have wings. Grasshoppers, katydids and cicadas are insects like crickets. **Ever wonder where crickets live?** Crickets are usually found in grassy areas, like meadows and pastures. This is true for grasshoppers, too. Cicadas live close to trees, and katydids live near leafy plants. Unlike ants, these insects don't build their homes; they just find safe places to rest. **Ever wonder how crickets and other bugs make noise?** Insects do not make noises in their throats like humans and many other animals do. Instead, they use parts of their body to make noise. Crickets and katydids make noise by rubbing their forewings together. Grasshoppers make noise by rubbing their back legs together, or by rubbing a leg against a wing. Cicadas make noise by moving drum-like organs called tymbals. (This is very similar to tapping a metal lid many times in succession.) **Ever wonder why these insects make noise?** Insects make noise to communicate. Usually only the male makes sounds, and usually it is to attract a girlfriend! Insects will also make noises to scare other animals away, to warn others about danger, or to mark their territory. **Ever wonder how these noisy insects hear each other?** Crickets, grasshoppers, katydids, and cicadas don't have ears like we do. They hear with a body part called the "tympanum" – which is located on their leg or belly! **Ever wonder why insects seem to be louder in late afternoon, and toward the end of the summer?** Insects are cold-blooded and need heat to "warm up" their noise-makers. That's why you hear more and more bugs during the day, until they reach their noisiest point early in the evening. Late summer is the time of year when insects most use their noise-makers to attract friends and start a family!



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