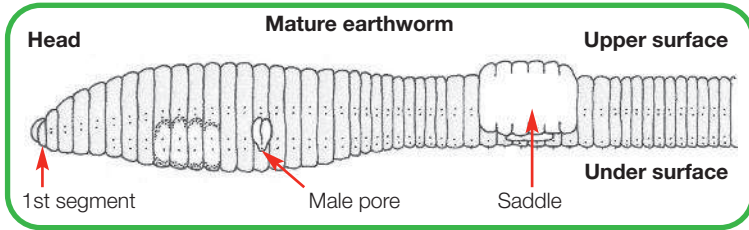


# Key to common British earthworms of amenity grasslands

By David T. Jones and Chris N. Lowe

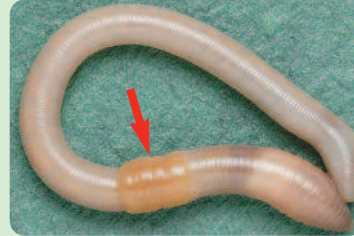
There are 26 British species of earthworm. This guide covers the seven most common species that occur in grass lawns and playing fields. It does not include the red stripy earthworms that occur in compost heaps, other species that occur in gardens, or woodland species.



It is not a mature earthworm - you can't identify it with this guide. At least 50% of the earthworms you find will be immatures.

## Start here

Is it more than 2cm long, AND does it have a clearly developed saddle?



The saddle is usually a different colour to the rest of the body, and slightly wider

It may be a species not on this guide

## Turn over

YES

Is the body from the first segment to the saddle partly or entirely pale in colour (whitish, pink, grey or greenish)? It may have some reddish or dark segments



NO

NO

Is the upper surface of the body, from the first segment to the saddle, entirely dark in colour (dark red, purplish red or chestnut brown)?



YES

Are the male pores visible?



YES

Is the earthworm longer than 8cm when NOT moving?

NO

NO

Hint  
Line drawings show typical sizes of the adult worm



Hint  
Sometimes slightly flattens its tail into a paddle shape

Redhead worm  
*Lumbricus rubellus*



**Black-headed worm** *Aporrectodea longa*

**A**

Hint  
Often a dark purplish head

Long and thin

Is the body: **A** Long and relatively thin or **B** Long and relatively fat?

Long and fat

**B**

Hint  
A stout worm, often as thick as a pencil


Hint  
Sometimes flattens its tail into a wide paddle shape

**Lob worm** *Lumbricus terrestris*



# From overleaf

**Green worm**  
*Allolobophora chlorotica*




Yellow ring

Yellow ring


**Hints**  
Two colour forms exist: pale and green  
Can exude a yellow fluid when handled  
Often curls up in the hand

Sometimes the yellow ring can be faint

**Hint**  
The head up to the saddle is usually in three distinct shades: pink or pale grey, then whitish, and then darker grey



**Grey worm** *Aporrectodea caliginosa*



Are the last four or five segments distinctly yellow?

**YES**

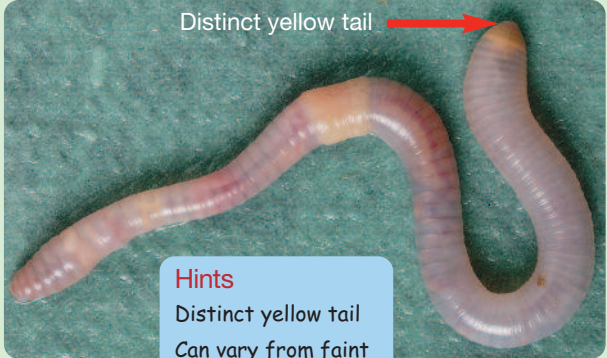
Distinct yellow tail



Tail not yellow or only slightly yellow




Distinct yellow tail




**Hints**  
Distinct yellow tail  
Can vary from faint blue-grey to a pale rosy pink colour  
May have a lilac-blue line on the upper surface

Distinct yellow tail



**Blue-grey worm** *Octolasion cyaneum*



**NO**

Does it have a yellow ring towards the head?

**YES**

**NO**

Does the worm have this colour combination?

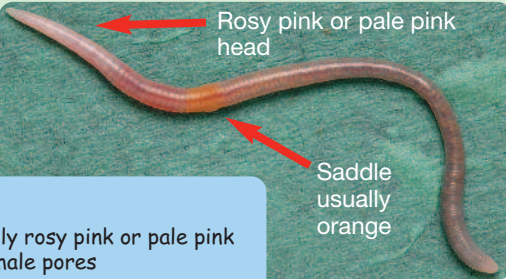


Pink or pale grey    Whitish    Darker grey    Saddle

**YES**


**NO**

Rosy pink or pale pink head



Saddle usually orange

**Hints**  
Head usually rosy pink or pale pink up to the male pores  
The saddle is usually orange, and can be wider towards the rear end  
Often has 2 or more whitish raised pads before the male pores



**Rosy-tipped worm** *Aporrectodea rosea*

