## Reading Passage: About Ants

There are more than 10,000 known species of ants living throughout the world. Ants can be identified by the constriction that looks like a waist between the abdomen, at the end of the body, and the part of the body called the thorax, which is located before the head. Their bodies are covered with a hard armour called the exoskeleton. While the exoskeleton is their defensive weapon, their rear abdominal stinger is their offensive one. Like other insects, they have six legs; each with three joints. Ants have large heads with compound eyes, elbowed antennae, and powerful pincers known as mandibles. These are an ant’s most useful tools which are used for holding, carrying and cutting.

There are three types of adult ants living in the colony: the queen, female ants, and male ants. **Queen ants** are the largest ants in the colony. They have wings and their purpose is to lay eggs. The queens can live up to 30 years. Depending on the ant species and the nest community size, there may be one or more queens in the colony. The ant life cycle has four stages of development: egg, larva, pupa and adult. The queen lays the eggs, which will hatch into larvae in a couple of days. The helpless larva are fed and groomed by the worker ants until they pass through the pupal stage. In a little more than a week, an adult ant will emerge, and the metamorphosis is complete.