

Are beds made of balsa wood?



Background knowledge

Some woods, such as ebony, are so hard that it is almost impossible to saw or knock a nail into them. Balsa wood is so soft you can easily break it with your fingers. Different woods are used to make different types of furniture, depending on how strong the furniture needs to be. Would you make your bed out of balsa wood?

Science activity

A class of children did a survey of furniture that had been attacked by woodworms. (Woodworms are beetle grubs that eat their way through timber, leaving tiny holes in the wood.) All of the furniture had been stored in the same room. Here are the results of the survey.

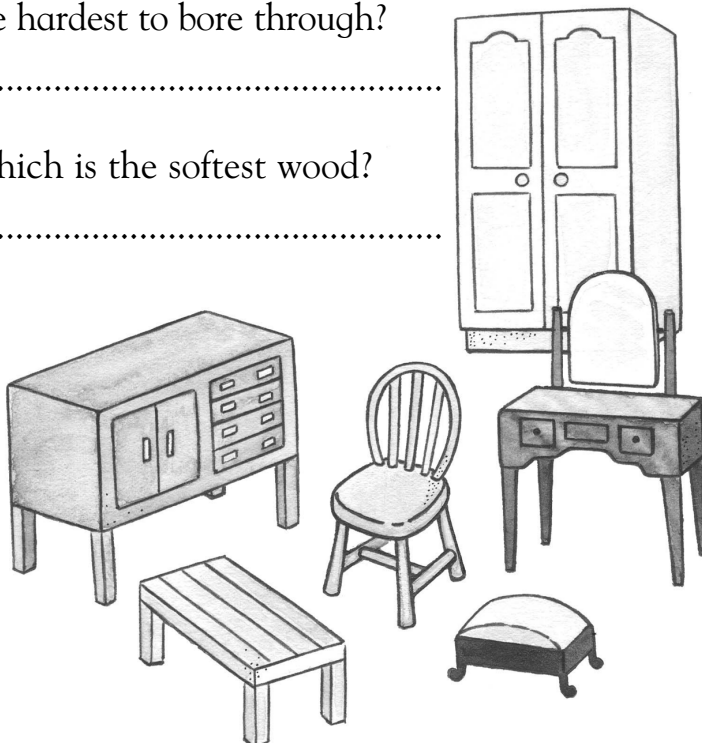
Furniture	Number of woodworm holes
Mahogany dressing table	15
Beech chair	20
Pine wardrobe	25
Teak sideboard	6
Oak table	10
Ebony stool	0

Which wood do woodworms find the hardest to bore through?

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Which is the softest wood?

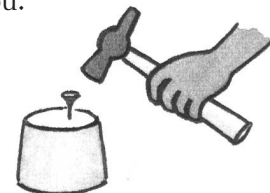
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Science investigation

! Take extra care - ask an adult to supervise you.

Collect samples of different types of wood. Design and conduct your own experiment to decide which is the hardest wood. You might test how long it takes to hammer a nail into each wood. An adult should help you.



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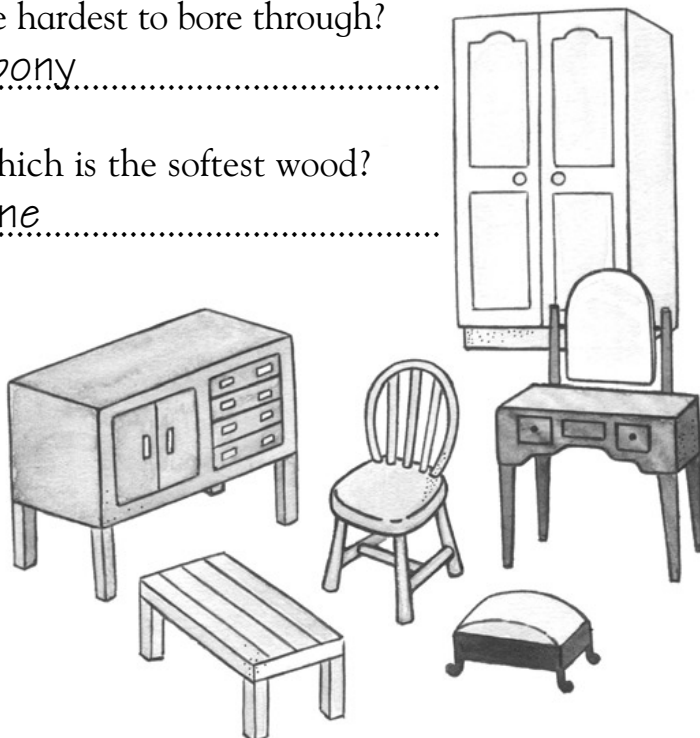
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Which wood do woodworms find the hardest to bore through?

Ebony.....

Which is the softest wood?

Pine.....



Science investigation

⚠ The adult may do the hammering if the child cannot. The child can time or count the number of times the hammer hits the nail. Hit each nail with the same force. Ask the child to discuss possible sources of error in this experiment.

