



Birth of a Snake

Word Bank

1. **oviparous-o (long o)-vip'-er-es**
2. **ovoviviparous-o (long o)-vo (long o)-vi (long i)-vip-er-es**
3. **viviparous-vi (long i)-vip'-er-es**

Snakes may enter the world in several different ways, depending on their species. It all starts with a mature female getting pregnant from a male of the same species. Once pregnant, there are three basic ways snakes are born. The first is for an egg to develop inside the mother. Then the egg is deposited, usually in a group, in a specific habitat to hatch. Unlike bird eggs, snake eggs are not hard. They are soft, like leather. Some snakes stay with their eggs. Others leave them to fend for themselves. We call this kind of birth **oviparous**. Some snakes give birth to live young. This can happen in two different ways. A mother nourishes the baby snake inside her until it is born. This is called **viviparous**. Some snakes have eggs that develop inside of them that are not nourished by the mother. The mother is more of a protective carrying container for the eggs. These baby snakes are hatched inside the mother. Then they are born alive. We call this **ovoviviparous**.

Snakes are born in groups, or clutches. The number of babies depends on the species. Once born, these

clutches are most often left to fend for themselves. A unique trait of snake breeding is that a female snake may breed only once with a male, but she may have up to three clutches. This is possible because many female snakes are capable of storing the male's sperm inside them until they are ready for another clutch. It is amazing that evolution has figured out these unique births to meet the needs of each species.

