Trilobites are a type of extinct arthropod.

Tri-lo-bite means three-part-body in Latin.

Trilobite bodies can be divided into three axial (long direction) lobes.

Trilobites can also be divided into three longitudinal parts (short direction); a head called the cephalon, an abdominal region called the thorax, and a tail region called the pygidium.

Trilobites were covered with an exoskeleton.

Trilobites’ exoskeletons were segmented, and they could roll into balls for protection.

Some trilobite exoskeletons were covered with spines and bumps for added protection.

Like many modern arthropods, trilobites shed their exoskeleton and developed a new one as they grew. This process is called molting. Most fossil trilobites are actually fossil trilobite molts. This is why fragmentary fossils are so common.

Trilobites were the first group of animals in the animal kingdom to develop complex eyes.

Trilobites were also one of the first organisms to develop multiple appendages for moving around.

The oldest trilobite fossils are from the Early Cambrian Period (about 550 million years ago). The youngest are from the Permian Period (about 250 million years ago).

Trilobites were most numerous and abundant at the end of the Cambrian Period (about 500 million years ago).

Trilobites lived in marine waters.

Some trilobites could swim, others burrowed or crawled around on muddy sea floors.

The smallest trilobite fossils are a centimeter or less in size.

The largest trilobites were more than 70 centimeters long.