

### What body parts are found on an ant?

Being true insects, ants possess the characteristics common to this group of animals:

- three body regions (head, thorax, abdomen),
- six jointed legs,
- a pair of antennae, and
- an exoskeleton.

Let's learn some details, shall we?

### Head

At the front of the **head** is the mouth. The **mandibles**, sometimes called jaws, are used for digging, carrying, collecting food, and building nests. Some other mouth parts are used for chewing food. Ants also have a tongue for sucking up liquid food.

Has anyone ever seen the antennae move? These parts are used to smell! With these sensors, ants pick up the scent of food in the air, stroke other ants, tap the ground, and touch food. Because each antenna is bent over like your elbow, we call it an **elbowed antenna**.

The **eyes** of ants only allow them to see things when they are close to their face.

### Thorax

The **thorax** is the middle region of the body, to which three pairs of **jointed legs** are connected. These six legs are used for running and handling food. What is a joint? Move your elbows, knuckles, and knees to find out!

Has anyone ever seen an ant walking on a wall, or upside down? They have special **clawed feet** that grab onto a surface, so ants can climb trees or walk on the underside of leaves. The ants use their two front legs to clean their other legs and antennae.

Ants can hear with their legs, in addition to their thorax, head, and antenna. They hear by feeling the vibrations in the ground. Try it out! Close your



eyes, and have a buddy pound their feet on the ground, bang on the table, or make some other kind of noise. Did you feel those vibrations?

### Abdomen

The **abdomen** contains the heart and stomach. Ants share their food with others, by spitting it up! Worker ants of some species carry a stinger on the back of their abdomen used to protect themselves or to fight other ants. In the front part of the abdomen, near the "waist" of the ant, you can see the **petiole**. This thin section behind the thorax allows the ant to bend while passing through twisting underground tunnels.

### Special Ant Parts

Two parts of an ant are useful in distinguishing ants from other insects. These two traits are the **elbowed antenna** (next time you spot a butterfly or a cockroach, notice those straight antennae!) and the **petiole**, which is often pointy. Consider putting a star next to these terms to remember their role in identifying ants.

### Color, label, and discuss!

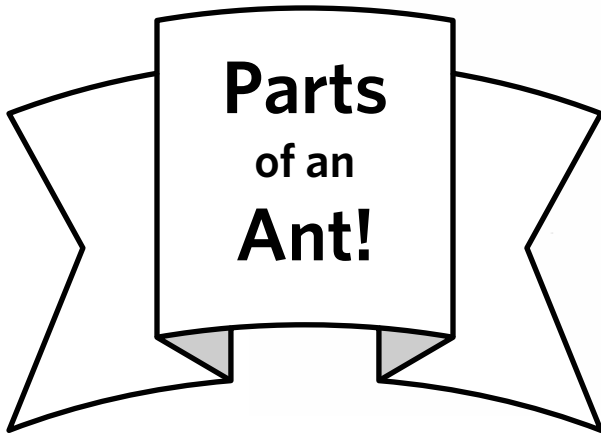
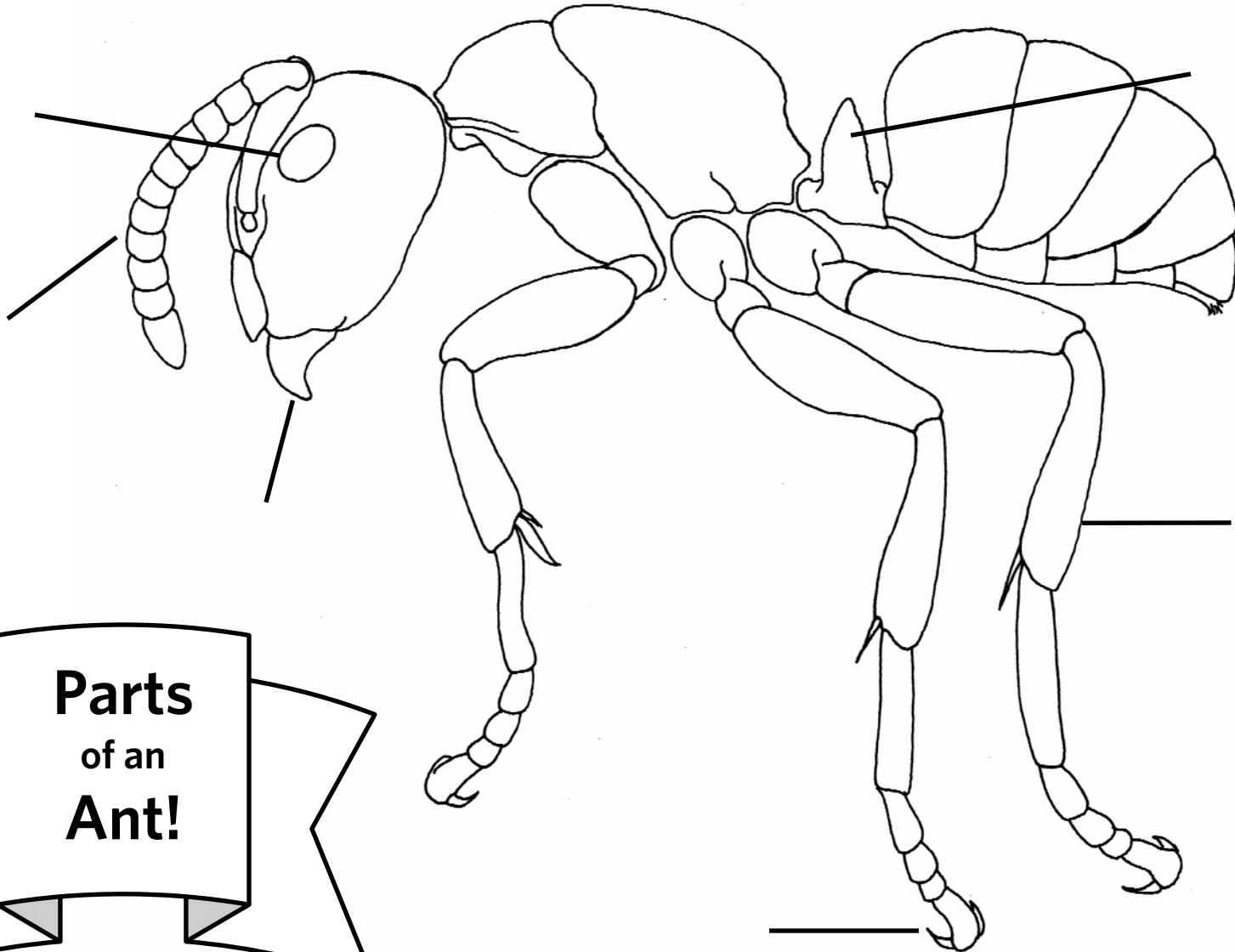
As you color the diagram showing the basic anatomy of the ant, discuss and label the major parts. What might be found inside the head? What are the mandibles used for? To what part are the legs connected? Where do you find claws? What body part is used for smelling? Walking? Biting? Hearing? Digging? Seeing?



1.

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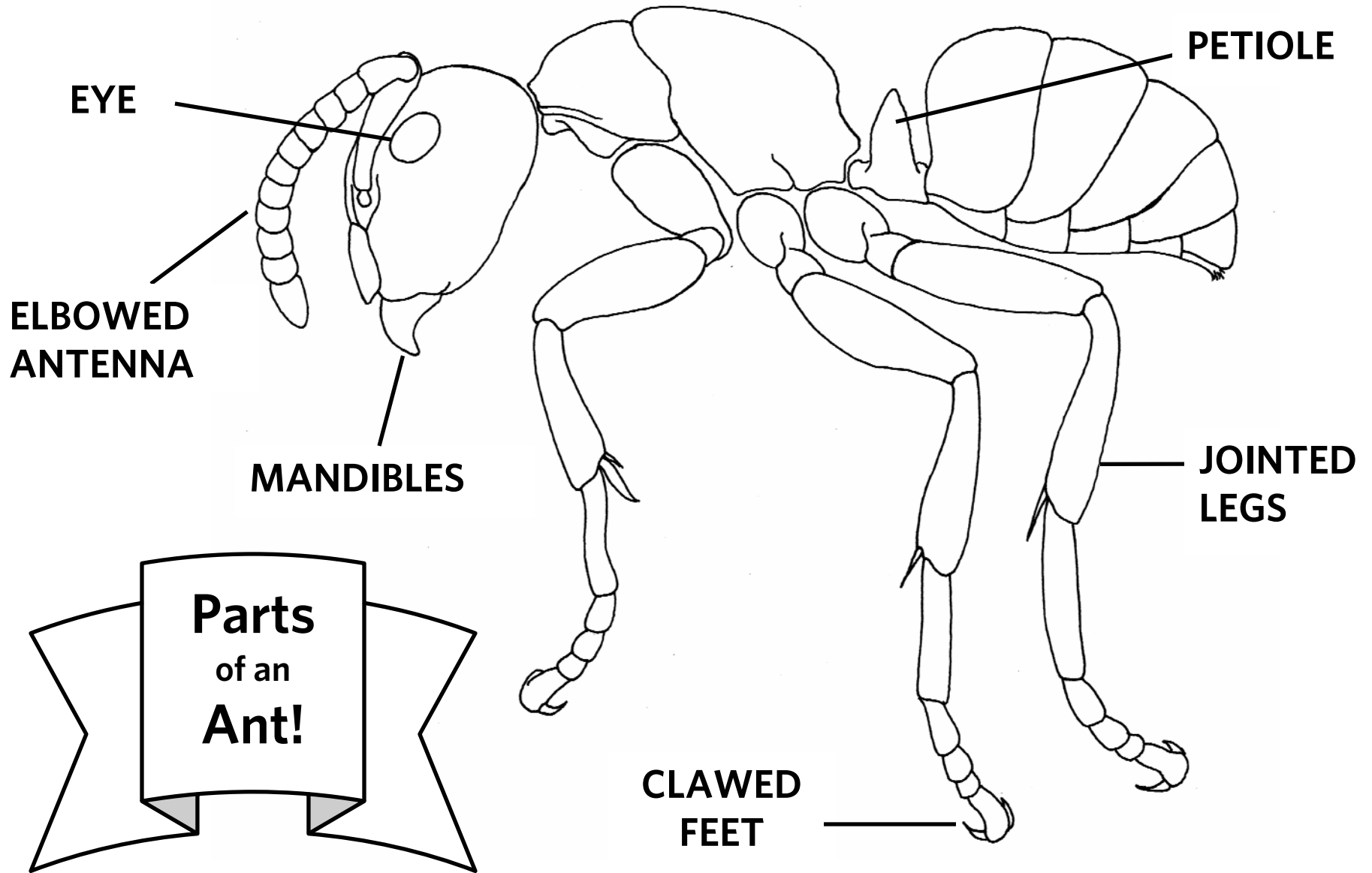




1. HEAD

2. THORAX

3. ABDOMEN



EYE

ELBOWED  
ANTENNA

MANDIBLES

Parts  
of an  
Ant!

PETIOLE

JOINTED  
LEGS

CLAWED  
FEET