The **mouth** (oral cavity) is where digestion begins. In the mouth are the teeth, tongue and the salivary glands. The teeth chew the food. This is the beginning of **mechanical digestion**. The tongue moves the food around to help break it down and mixes it with saliva. **Saliva** is secreted by the salivary glands and begins the **chemical digestion** of starchy foods (like bread). Food is chewed and rolled into a **bolus** (lump) to be swallowed. When the food is swallowed, it passes through the **pharynx** (back of the throat) down into the **esophagus**. The pharynx is broken down into three parts, the **nasopharynx** at the back of the nasal cavity, the **oropharynx** at the back of the throat between the uvula and the epiglottis and the **laryngopharynx** (or hypopharynx) between the and the esophagus. The **epiglottis** is cartilage-filled flap that closes over the opening to the **trachea** when swallowing to prevent food from entering the lungs. The **esophagus** is a long, muscular tube about 10 inches long (25 cm). Food passes down it to reach the stomach. The muscles of the esophagus contract to squeeze the food downward. This is called **peristalsis**.
The Structures of the Mouth, Pharynx and Esophagus

- Nasal cavity
- Oral cavity
- Mandible
- Tongue
- Larynx (voice box)
- Trachea
- Opening for eustachian tube
- Nasopharynx
- Oropharynx
- Epiglottis
- Laryngopharynx (hypopharynx)
- Esophagus
Label the Structures of the Mouth, Pharynx and Esophagus

1. ______________________________________________________________
2. ______________________________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________________
4. ______________________________________________________________
5. ______________________________________________________________
6. ______________________________________________________________
7. ______________________________________________________________
8. ______________________________________________________________
9. ______________________________________________________________
10. ______________________________________________________________
11. ______________________________________________________________
12. ______________________________________________________________
13. ______________________________________________________________
Label the Structures of the Mouth, Pharynx and Esophagus KEY

1. nasal cavity
2. oral cavity
3. eustacian tube
4. nasopharynx
5. oropharynx
6. epiglottis
7. uvula
8. laryngopharynx (hypopharynx)
9. esophagus
10. trachea
11. larynx (voice box or vocal chords)
12. mandible
13. tongue

©Sheri Amsel
www.exploringnature.org