JELLYFISH
More than 200 species of jellyfish inhabit Earth's waters!

Jellyfish, despite their name, are not fish. Instead, they are invertebrates (any animal lacking a backbone). In fact, 97% of all animal species on Earth are invertebrates!

Most jellyfish are carnivores, feeding on zooplankton (other jellyfish, juvenile fish, and larval crustaceans), as well as fish and other marine creatures they catch with their stinging tentacles.

Jellyfish live in the ocean. They can be found both in deep water and along the shore, in warm or cold waters, all over the world.

**Jellyfish have no eyes, no heart, no bones, and no brain!**

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**Bell**
The bell is the umbrella-shaped body of the jellyfish. Jellyfish move by opening and closing the bell.

**Gastric Pouch**
What did you have for breakfast? If you were a jellyfish, anyone could look right into your stomach and know. Jellyfish usually have four horseshoe-shaped rings called gastric pouches that digest food. Their mouth is located in the center of the four gastric pouches. When you come visit Shark Reef, you can look right through the bell and tell if they have had their breakfast. The gastric pouches will be all puffed up with food.

**Radial Canals**
These canals carry nutrients throughout the jellyfish.

**Tentacles**
Look out! Don’t let those long stringy things touch you! The tentacles are used to gather food and are covered with thousands of stinging cells. Some jellyfish tentacles have a mild sting, but the sting of others can be deadly!

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**Oral Arms**
The oral arms hang from the center of the jellyfish. They are covered with stinging cells and they are used to bring food towards the mouth.

**Underside of a jellyfish**
Jellyfish come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The tiny, spherical thimble jellyfish grows only to the size of a pea! The largest jellyfish of all is the lion’s mane jelly, which has tentacles 100 feet (30.5m) long and a bell 8 feet (2.4m) across!

The tentacles of a lion’s mane jellyfish are as long as a basketball court!

ARE JELLYFISH GOOD TO EAT?

People, ocean sunfish, and sea turtles feed on jellyfish. But sea turtles often mistake plastic sandwich bags for jellyfish. When the turtles eat the plastic, they often choke and suffocate. Many people consider jellyfish a delicacy! They are dried and de-salted to provide a low-fat, low-calorie meal.

I’M HUNGRY!
A peanut butter and jellyfish sandwich sounds good!

Did you know...

You cannot make a peanut butter and jellyfish sandwich using a jellyfish. Jellyfish may be sticky like jelly, but there is no jelly in a jellyfish. Jellyfish are made up of 96% water, 3% protein, and 1% minerals.
Jellyfish, which may look harmless, have stinging cells called **cnidocytes** on their tentacles and other body parts. Each of these stinging cells contains a **nematocyst**, which acts like a mini-harpoon. When a jellyfish touches something, the nematocyst is released and injects toxin into the prey.

*Did you know...*
Throughout the world, more people die each year from the sting of the Australian box jelly than from crocodiles and sharks combined!

*Did you know...*
The sting of the Australian box jelly is so deadly it can kill a person in minutes!

*Did you know...*
Dead jellyfish can sting as long as their tentacles are moist!

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**HOW DO JELLYFISH MOVE?**

Jellyfish move by a process called **jet propulsion**. The jellyfish will expand, and then quickly contract its bell-shaped body. This forces water away from the bell and pushes the jellyfish in the opposite direction. In addition to swimming, jellyfish are also carried by waves and currents.

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**CAN JELLYFISH STING?**

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Photo courtesy of Tennessee Aquarium; www.tennis.org/special/sting.html
JELLYFISH LIFE CYCLE

**Medusa (adult)**
This is the stage most people think of when they hear the term jellyfish.

**Planula**
Jellyfish eggs hatch into small swimming animals that are called planulas. Planulas float around the ocean until they find a solid surface to attach to.

**Polyp**
After settling on a solid surface, the planula grows and develops tentacles similar to an anemone. It is now called a polyp.

**Strobila**
A strobila is a polyp that looks like it has many small jellyfish stacked on top of each other. When environmental conditions are right, the polyp divides and the many small jellyfish break off and float away. These small jellyfish are called ephyras.

**Ephyra**
Ephyras resemble adult jellyfish, but they are still developing tentacles and feeding structures. Eventually, the ephyras will grow and develop into medusas and start the cycle all over.

Drawing courtesy of Allison Sosa.
JELLYFISH CONSERVATION

There is no special status for jellyfish, since they are currently plentiful in the world's oceans!

BENEFITS OF JELLYFISH

* Cannonball jellyfish have been found to contain collagen, which is known to have therapeutic effects for arthritis.

* Some jellyfish are being used to treat certain cancers and heart disease.

* Jellyfish offer shelter in open water for tiny fishes and crabs that travel under the bell of their jellyfish host.

* Jellyfish are an important source of food for endangered sea turtles.

A GROUP OF JELLYFISH IS CALLED A “SMACK”

A “smack” of jellyfish!
Animal Riddles...

I move in the sea, graceful and slow.

I don't have any eyes, to see where to go.

My stomach looks like 4 circular rings.

Better be careful, because I can sting.

What animal am I?

Draw your answer below.
Jellyfish Coloring Page