



The Octopus

An Octopus is an salt-water ocean creature that has 8 arms and a big head. There are about 300 kinds of Octopuses. They range in size from smaller than an inch to 30 feet. They can weigh less than a gram all they up to 600 lbs. Some species only live a few months, but the larger ones can live up to 5 years.

An octopus has 8 brains, one in each arm, that answers to a central brain. The advantages of all those brains is that each one can do a separate task. The disadvantage of all those brains is that if you cut off an octopuses arm, it will keep trying to gather food to feed it to a mouth that isn't there! Meanwhile, the central Octopus brain will have another arm regrown to replace the one that was cut off.

An octopus is an invertebrate, which means it does not have any bones. They can squeeze into very small spaces. They are also really smart and have excellent eyesight. In a zoo in Germany, an octopus named Otto figured out that if he spit water at a light, it would blow the blub. It took the humans a long time to figure out why that bulb kept going out! An octopus at the National Aquarium of New Zealand squeezed out of its tank and made an eight-armed dash for a drainpipe that — luckily for him — led directly to the sea.

An octopus has 3 hearts and blue blood. One pumps blood through its organs; the two others pump blood through its gills. An octopus uses its gills to breathe. Octopus blood is blue because it has a copper enzyme in it.

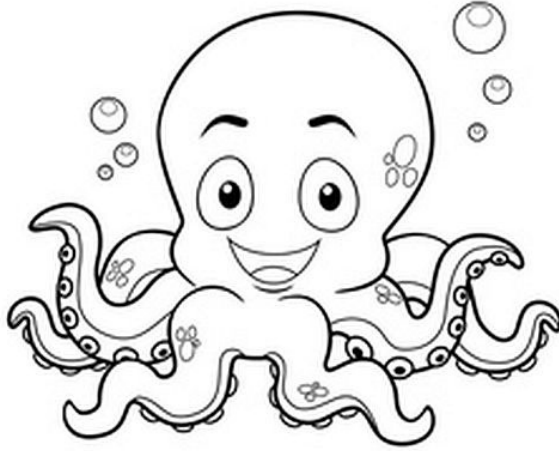
When an octopus is swimming, the organ that delivers blood to the organs stops beating. This exhausts the octopus, which is why they prefer to crawl than swim. To swim, octopuses suck water into their bodies and shoot it out a tube called a siphon. This lets the octopus blast off, away from attackers.

When scared, octopuses will shoot a dark liquid, sometimes called ink, at the thing that scared them. This will temporarily blind and confuse a potential attacker, giving the octopus time to swim away. The ink can also dull the attacker's smelling and tasting abilities. Octopus ink is sometimes used to color pasta.

Octopuses can also change color to hide and match their surroundings. They can turn blue, gray, pink, brown or green. This helps them find food with the suckers on their arms. They eat clams, crabs, shrimp, lobsters, fish, sharks and even birds. Octopuses typically drop down on their prey, wrap their arms around it and pull the animal into their mouth which has a very sharp beak.

Octopuses only reproduce once. Females usually lay 200,000 to 400,000 eggs, guarding them until they hatch in about a month. After they hatch, she dies. When they hatch, baby octopuses are called larvae. They drift in plankton clouds and eat other animal larvae until they mature. As part of the plankton cloud, they are also in danger of being eaten by plankton eaters. As an adult octopus, they can be eaten by fish, birds, eels, dolphins and some types of whales.

Your Homework



How many different colors can an octopus be? Color the octopus above your favorite color.

What color is the blood of an octopus? Do you know of any other animal that has that color blood?

Does an octopus live in salt water or fresh water?

Would you like to be an octopus? Why or why not?
