

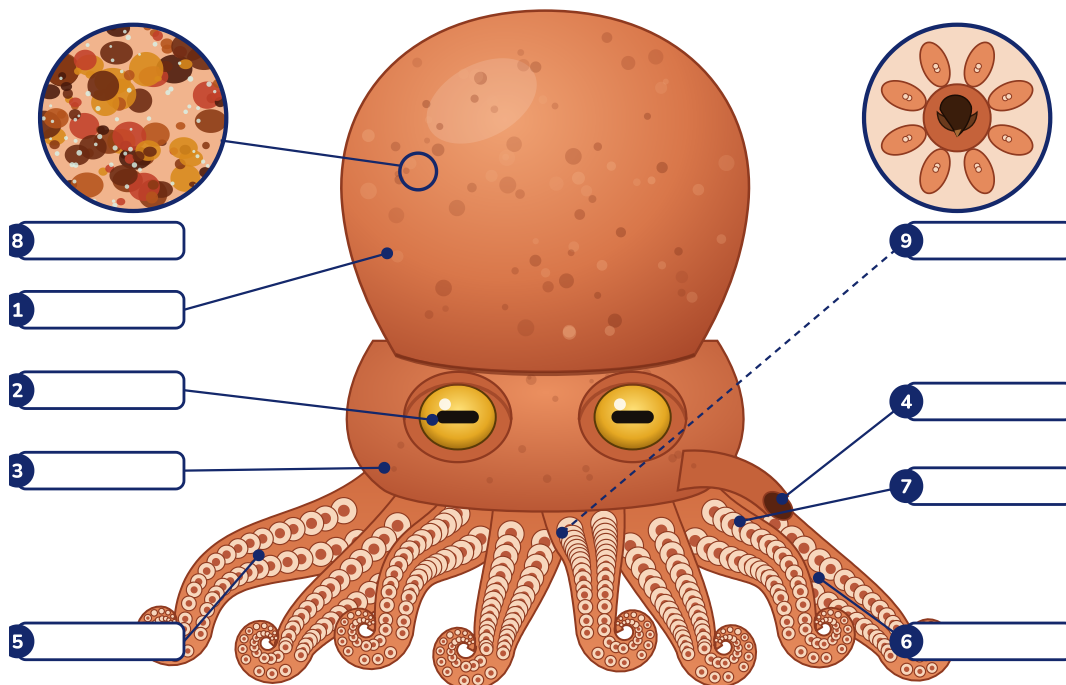
The Common Octopus

Octopus vulgaris



Look at the diagram of the octopus. Write the correct part of the body from the word bank in each numbered box.

arms | beak | chromatophores | eye | head | mantle | siphon (funnel) | suckers | web



Numbers 8 and 9 show close-up views: a patch of skin, and the underside of the octopus where the arms meet.

About the Common Octopus

The common octopus is a **mollusc**, in the same large group as snails and clams, but it belongs to a class called **cephalopods**. It lives on rocky seabeds, in crevices and among seagrass in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, from the shoreline down to about 200 metres. That puts it in the **sunlight zone**.

How does it move? It crawls along the seabed with its arms. To escape danger it fills the mantle with water and squeezes it out of the siphon, shooting backwards in a jet.

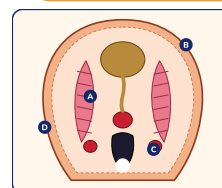
What does it eat? It hunts crabs, clams and small fish, mostly at dusk and at night. It bites with its beak, and its saliva contains a toxin that helps to subdue its prey.

How does it hide? Chromatophores and other skin cells change its colour and texture to match rock, sand or weed. If that fails, it can squirt a cloud of ink.

How does it breed? The female lays many thousands of eggs in a den and guards them, without feeding, until they hatch.

Did you know?

- An octopus has **three hearts** and **blue blood**. The blood carries oxygen with a copper-based substance, not iron.
- It has **eight arms**, not tentacles. Squid and cuttlefish have eight arms and two longer tentacles.
- Its suckers can **taste** as well as grip, so it can taste what it touches.
- It can squeeze through any gap as **big as its beak**, the only hard part of its body.
- Most octopuses live only **one to two years**.



Inside the mantle (simplified). Match the letters to the key.

A gill B digestive gland C ink sac D heart (how many? ____)

Where does it live?

Sunlight 0-200 m

Common octopus: shelf seabed

Twilight 200-1,000 m

Midnight 1,000-4,000 m

Abyss 4,000-6,000 m

Trenches 6,000 m and deeper

Functions of Each Part	
Part	Function
Mantle	
Eyes	
Siphon	
Arms	
Suckers	
Chromatophores	
Beak	

Hint: use the diagram, the About box and the Did you know? panel to complete the Function column.

Answer the Questions

- Cephalopod means "head-foot". Where on the body are an octopus's arms attached?
- An octopus has three hearts. What do the two gill hearts do, and what does the third do?
- Give two different ways an octopus can escape from a predator.
- An octopus has no bones. Give one advantage and one risk of a soft body.
- The common octopus lives in the sunlight zone. Name two things that change as you dive deeper than 200 metres.
- Stretch: about two thirds of an octopus's nerve cells are in its arms. What might this mean for how an arm behaves?