



EXPLORE Marine Biology

Illustrated Marine Biology Tutorials

How Corals Reproduce

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Explore Marine Biology

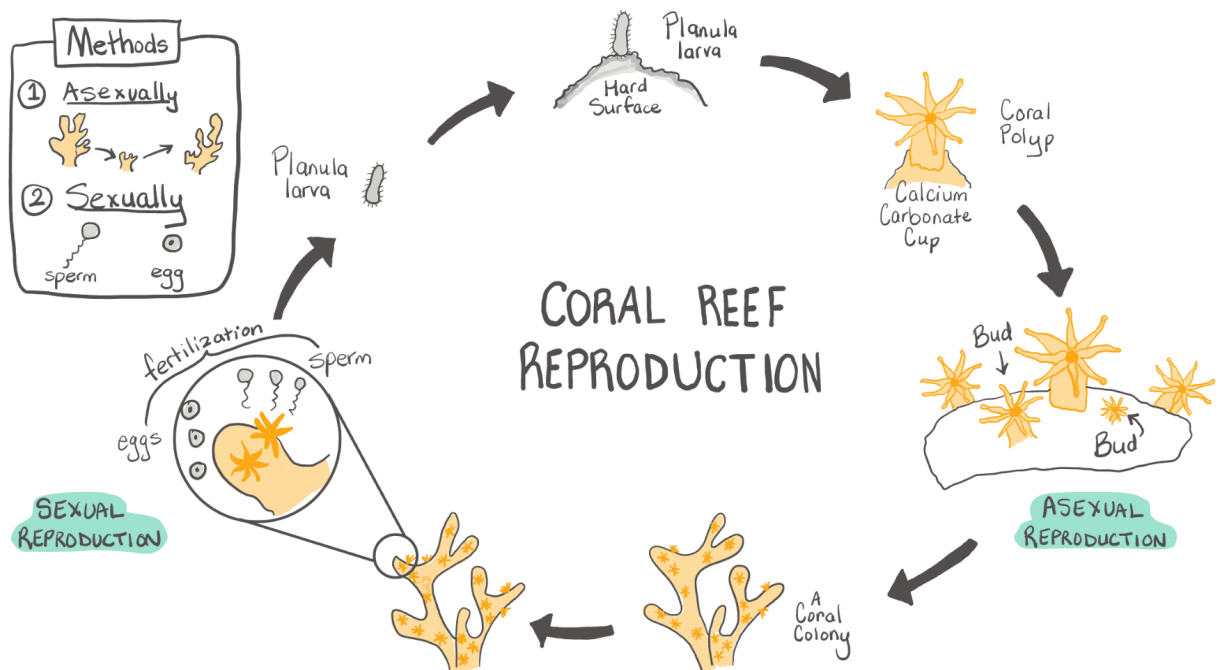
How Corals Reproduce

Corals can reproduce in two different ways, firstly via **asexual reproduction**, and secondly by **sexual reproduction**. Let's take a look at how each of those works.

When there are turbulent waters such as during a storm, coral reefs can break into fragments, but in asexual reproduction, these fragments can reattach themselves to the substrate and grow and form brand-new colonies.

In sexual reproduction, many coral species have ovaries and testes, whereas some have separate sexes. Corals would release their sperm and eggs into the surrounding water, and the eggs will then become fertilized.

Let us take a closer look at how this works.





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A coral colony begins when a planula larva attaches to a hard surface. The planula develops into a polyp, and the polyp makes a cup of calcium carbonate underneath the polyp, then reproduces asexually by budding and produces brand new polyps that in turn produce a calcareous cup underneath its own body.

Next, the colony continues to grow as the new polyps repeat the budding process. Some polyps develop gonads. The sperm and egg produced by these polyps are then shed into the surrounding water where the eggs are fertilized, and the fertilized eggs develop into a new planula larva.

And this begins the process of colony formation over again.