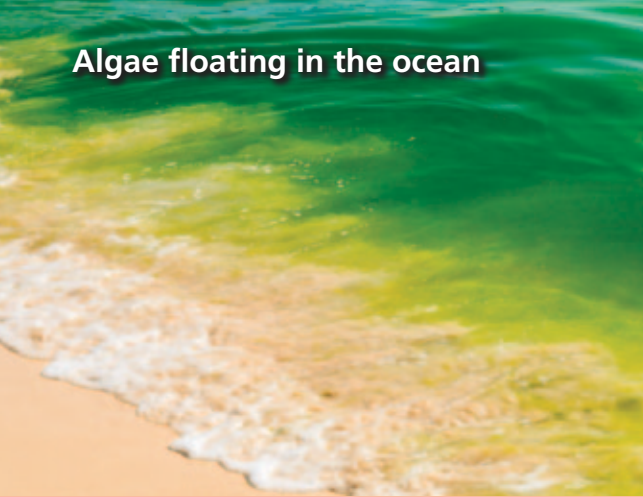


🗨️ When we look out at the sea, we see a vast expanse of water. But when we look under the ocean's surface, we find an amazing world filled with deep trenches, high mountains, dark caves, and colorful coral reefs. We also find an enormous variety of plants and animals from the tiny krill to the mighty whale.

🗨️ There are very small animals in the ocean. Some are so small you can't even see them. There are very big animals. Whales are some of the biggest animals to ever live on Earth.



Algae floating in the ocean



Protozoa plankton
(seen through a microscope)



Life in the ocean can be divided into three major groups. The first group, called **plankton**, includes the plants and animals that move and drift with the currents and tides. Some types of algae (AL-jee) are **plankton** that drift in the ocean. Other types of algae cling to the bottom of shallow waters, like tide pools.

Some types of **plankton** can be large, like jellyfish with their long **tentacles**. However, most types of **plankton** are very tiny.

Tide pool



Green algae

Pacific sea nettle jellyfish



These **tentacles**
have stinging venom.



Most animal **plankton** are not very strong. They drift as the movement of the water pushes them. That is mainly how they move around the oceans.

Stove pipe sponge



Stylophora coral



Red sea anemone



Sea fan



A second group of plants and animals that live in the ocean, called the *benthos*, live on or in the ocean floor.

This group contains such unique life forms as coral, sponges, anemones (uh-NEM-uh-nees), sea stars, crabs, clams, and sea squirts. Corals and sponges are animals, but they do not have brains or eyes.



This is a sea star. Some people call it a starfish, but it is not a fish. Most sea stars have one tiny eye on the tip of each arm.



Giant clam



The giant clam seen in this picture has a body made up of two shells connected by large, strong muscles. That's why it's so hard to open a clamshell! A giant clam can weigh more than a gorilla and can live longer than people can.

Sally lightfoot crabs



Pygmy seahorse in a sea fan



This is a sea fan. It looks like a plant, but it is an animal. There is a sea horse hiding in the sea fan. The sea horse looks a lot like the sea fan.