

The Life Cycle of a Butterfly

The life cycle of a butterfly is amazing. Read on to find out how a butterfly goes from an egg to a butterfly!

The Egg

The life cycle of a butterfly starts when a female butterfly lays her eggs on a leaf or the stem of a plant.

The eggs are very tiny, and different types of butterflies will lay eggs in different shapes, sizes and colours. Tiny caterpillars grow inside these eggs.



From Egg to Caterpillar

When a caterpillar is ready, it eats its way out of its egg. Caterpillars are always hungry and they will start to eat leaves straight away!

As the caterpillar eats more and more, it gets bigger and bigger. The caterpillar will need to shed its skin because it becomes too tight. A caterpillar may shed its skin four or five times as it grows!



From Caterpillar to Chrysalis

When a caterpillar is fully grown, it changes itself into a chrysalis. A hard case then forms around the chrysalis. Inside the case, the caterpillar starts to change into a butterfly.



The Butterfly

When the butterfly is ready, the casing of the chrysalis splits open and the butterfly emerges (comes out).

The butterfly cannot fly straight away as its wings are soft, wet and wrinkled. The butterfly needs to wait until its wings are dry before it can fly.

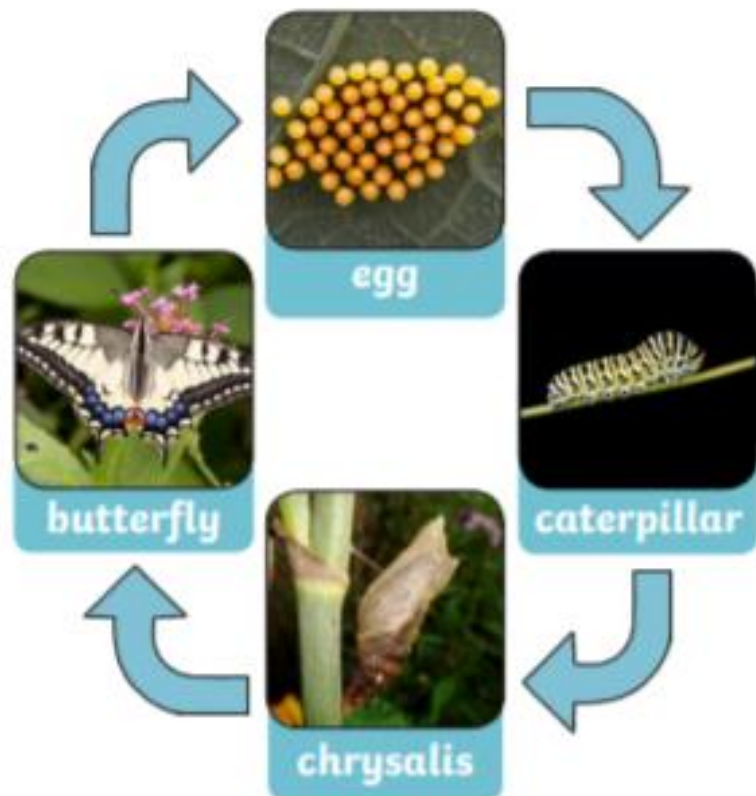
The butterfly spends its time feeding from the nectar of flowers. It will also drink sweet liquid from fruit.

When it is ready, it will look for a mate and the whole life cycle of the butterfly will begin again!



Fun Facts!

- Most caterpillars have 16 legs.
- Caterpillars sometimes have tiny hairs on their bodies. This helps to protect them from predators.



Questions

1. Where does a female butterfly lay its eggs? Tick one.

- on a leaf or the stem of a plant
- in a nest
- underground

2. How does a caterpillar get out of its egg?

3. Draw a line to match each word with its description.

emerges	move out of something and become visible
nectar	an animal that hunts another animal or creature
predator	a sugary liquid found in flowers

4. In your own words, describe what a chrysalis is.

5. Which three adjectives are used to describe a butterfly's wings when it first emerges from its chrysalis?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

6. Why do you think that butterflies lay their eggs on leaves or stems of plants?
