Beachcombers

Physical features

The United Kingdom is an island with a long, varied coastline. A physical feature is a feature that has occurred naturally. There are many physical features along the coastline, such as arches, caves, stacks and islands. Rain, wind and waves can change the shape of the coastline and physical features over time.
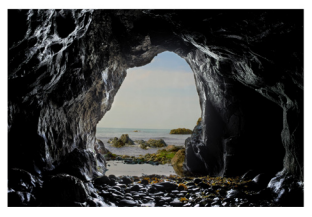
An **arch** forms when the rock of a headland is worn away by the sea.

A **stack** is formed when an arch collapses. It is a column that stands on its own in the sea.

A **cave** is a large hole in the side of a cliff that forms when waves wash away the rock.

An **island** is formed when land breaks away from a continent or volcanoes form under the sea and rise out of the water.

Habitats

There are many habitats at the coast. A habitat is the place where a plant or animal lives and has everything it needs to survive, including air, food, water and shelter. Coastal habitats include cliffs, beaches, sand dunes and marshes.

cliff

beach

sand dune

marsh

Microhabitats

There are also many microhabitats at the coast. A microhabitat is a smaller habitat found within a larger habitat. Microhabitats include rock pools and under rocks or driftwood.

rocks

driftwood

Living things

Life can be very hard for animals and plants that live at the coast. They have to cope with strong winds, heavy rain, crashing waves and the tides. Animals and plants that live there have adaptations that help them survive in the tough conditions.

Oystercatchers have long legs for wading through shallow water. Their long beak helps them open the shells of mussels and cockles.

Shore crabs have hard shells to protect their soft bodies. They can live underwater or on land under rocks and stones.

Limpets have a strong, muscular foot, which holds them tightly to rocks and stops them from being washed away or drying out.
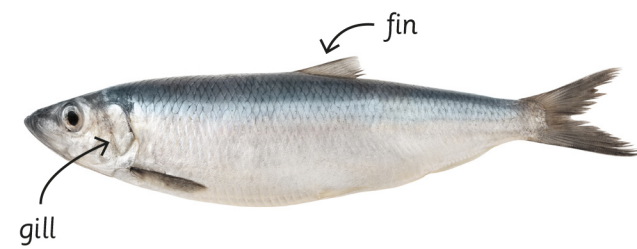

Seaweed is a type of algae. It clings to rocks using a special part called a holdfast, which stops it from being washed away.
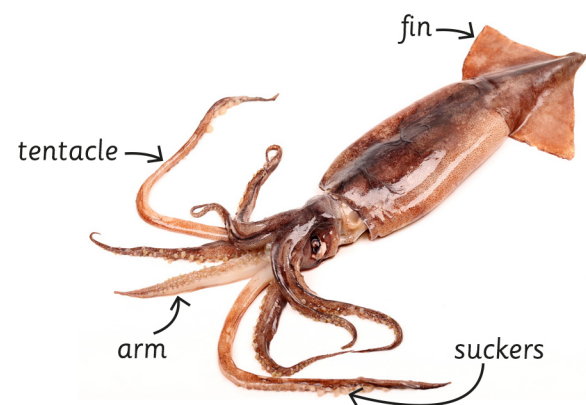
Tip: Print in A3.

Aquatic animals

Seas and oceans are very large habitats. A huge number of different animals live in seas and oceans. These animals have special body parts that help them to breathe, move, feed and protect themselves.

fin

gill

Fish have gills that help them breathe underwater. Their body shape and fins help them move easily through the water.

fin

tentacle

arm

suckers

Squid have gills inside their bodies to breathe underwater. They have long, thin bodies and fins that help them move through the water. They have suckers on their tentacles and arms that they use to grab prey. To protect themselves from their predators, they release a black ink that helps them escape.

Non-living things

Many non-living things can be found on the beach. Sand, water and rocks are non-living things. Sometimes, non-living things are left on the beach by visitors or washed up from the sea. These non-living things can be harmful to the environment.

fishing net

plastic bottle

Pollution

A lot of the waste that is thrown away goes into the world's seas and oceans. This is called pollution. Plastic waste takes a long time to break down and tiny parts of it will never go away. Plastic waste can be harmful to living things.

Plastic waste polluting the beach at Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.

Glossary

algae	A simple, plant-like living thing that grows in or near water.
aquatic	Living in or near water.
beach	An area of sand or shingle between the sea or ocean and the land.
cliff	A high area of rock with straight side.
coast	The land near the sea.
headland	An area of cliff that extends into the sea or ocean.
island	A piece of land with water all around it.
predator	An animal that eats other animals.
prey	Animals that are eaten by other animals.
rock pool	A pool filled with seawater on a rocky seashore.
sea	A large area of saltwater. Seas cover large parts of the Earth.