

MEET THE OCTOPUS

Would you like to shake hands with an octopus? If you could, which of its eight long arms, or tentacles, would you choose?

An octopus is indeed a most unusual and interesting creature found in ocean waters. It is known as an **invertebrate**, meaning it does not have a skeleton. Since it doesn't have a skeleton, it is very squishy, and even a large octopus can squeeze into very small spaces. Octopuses have two eyes, eight tentacles with suckers, a beak like a parrot, and three hearts! They are very intelligent. They can unscrew jar lids to remove food, escape from their tanks, and have been known to squirt people that they seem to dislike.

Soft, boneless bodies allow octopuses to change shape. They also have special skin cells full of pigment that allow them to change color and **camouflage** themselves. **Camouflage** is a visual disguise that helps an animal blend into its surroundings by making it hard to see. The ability to change color, shape, and texture allows the octopus to hide from enemies and potential prey.

Can you find the octopus hiding in the coral in this photo?



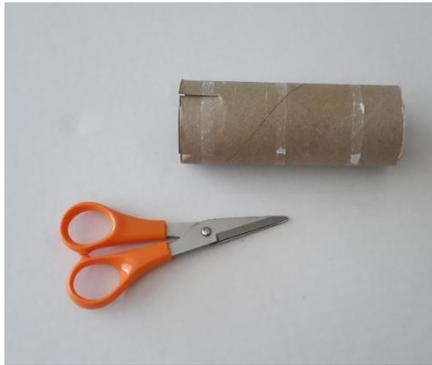
It is very easy to make a toy octopus from some things you probably have at home:

- Empty toilet tissue rolls or paper cups
- Scissors
- Yarn
- Paper eyes or plastic Googly eyes
- Glue
- Markers
- Paint (optional)
- Curling ribbon (optional)

We'll make two kinds of octopus – one in your favorite color and another that you camouflage.

Start by making four slits in the end of the toilet roll, about an inch long.

Fold the pieces in on each other and glue them together. It helps to place a small rock on top to hold them together until the glue dries. If you use a paper cup, turn the cup upside down and continue as follows.



Punch eight holes around the bottom of the other end of the tube/cup.

Paint the tubes with nice bright colors. If you don't have paint, you can cover the tubes with construction paper or gift wrap. If painting, wait for paint to dry, and then decorate with markers.

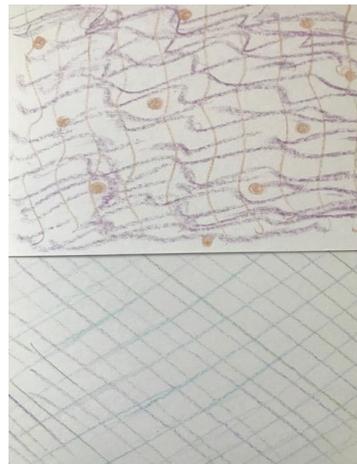
Add googly eyes or you can draw them yourself.

Loop some lengths of yarn through the holes at the bottom to represent the tentacles.

Add curling ribbon or yarn on top for hair. You can also punch a hole in the top to add a string to hang your octopus.

Here's a happy yellow octopus example #1:

Ideas for camouflage patterns for octopus #2:



Once you've created a patterned, camouflaged octopus #2, hide it in your yard or inside your home where it's hard to see and then ask a friend or family member to find it.

Did your camouflage work? If not, try another pattern or a different hiding place next time.

Biology is the branch of science that studies living things. A scientist who studies biology is called a **biologist**. Biology is very complex, and biologists often choose to specialize in one specific area; for example, **botany** is the study of plants, and **zoology** is the study of animals. There are some biologists who only study octopuses!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/invertebrates/octopus/>

<https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/visit/exhibits/giant-pacific-octopus>

<https://www.sciencefriday.com/educational-resources/cephalopod-camouflage-beauty-thats-skin-deep/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aoCzZHcwKxI&feature=emb_title

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHRS3bD4yPM>

Books available from the Washoe County Library System:

Octopus by Elizabeth R. Johnson

Being an Octopus by Kevin Pearce

The Octopus Scientists: Exploring the Mind of a Mollusk by Sy Montgomery and Keith A. Ellenbogen