

Baby Sharks

Baby birds hatch from eggs. Baby dogs are born live from their mothers' wombs. Baby sharks can come into the world in either way—and sometimes even a bit of both. Sharks reproduce in three main ways.



Sharks that lay eggs in the sea

Some sharks, including this brown cat shark, lay eggs. Shark eggs do not have a hard rounded shell like bird's eggs. Instead, each egg has its own tough, leathery egg case. The mother shark lays the egg case attached to seaweeds or corals so it will not be buried in the sea floor. The baby shark grows inside the egg case until it is ready to hatch. In the cold waters of the North Pacific Ocean, a baby brown cat shark will take more than two years to grow inside its egg case. It is about three inches (eight centimeters) long when it hatches.



An egg case's shape, size, and color can tell researchers what type of shark it is from. Most shark egg cases have long tendrils that help them stay attached to seaweed or coral.



The mother shark can carry many eggs at a time—but the first shark to hatch might eat the other eggs before it leaves its mother's body.

Sharks that lay eggs inside themselves

Making a shell or tough purse is one way a mother shark can protect a precious egg. Another way is to keep the egg inside herself until it is ready to hatch. As the baby grows inside its egg, it gets its food from its own egg yolk. When the egg hatches, the mother gives birth to the live baby. Great white sharks, frilled sharks, mako sharks, and thresher sharks are just some of the shark babies that are born this way.

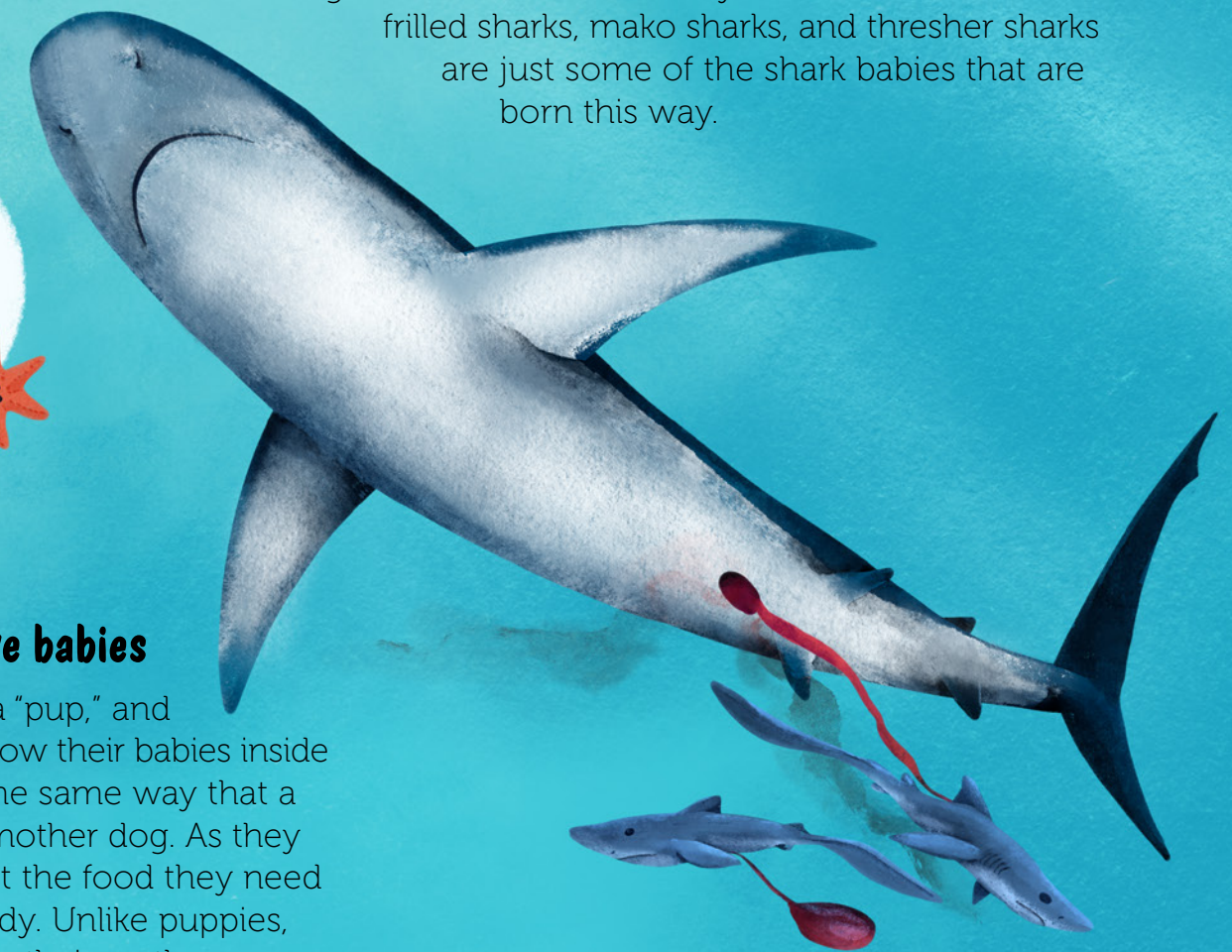
Did you know?

A frilled shark carries its babies for more than three years before they are born.



Sharks that grow live babies

A baby shark is called a "pup," and some kinds of sharks grow their babies inside their bodies in much the same way that a puppy grows inside a mother dog. As they develop, shark pups get the food they need from their mother's body. Unlike puppies, though, shark pups leave their mother as soon as they are born. Hammerheads, bull sharks, blue sharks, and lemon sharks all give birth this way. A great hammerhead shark can give birth to more than 50 pups at a time.



Blue shark pups are born ready to hunt, but they will take many years to grow to their adult size.