



Meet the plankton

Background reading for teachers

This reading gives you the background for each slide.

Plankton

Plankton are organisms that drift with currents rather than swimming against them. Phytoplankton photosynthesise, and marine phytoplankton produce about half of the world's oxygen.¹ Zooplankton include copepods, which are among the most numerous animals on Earth, and the larvae of many crabs, fish and corals. Diatoms, a common kind of phytoplankton, have glassy cell walls made of silica.

Filter feeders

Whale sharks and manta rays feed mainly on plankton by filtering large volumes of water, and corals catch zooplankton with their tentacles.

Sources

1. National Geographic (2004). Source of half Earth's oxygen gets little credit. [nationalgeographic.com](https://www.nationalgeographic.com)

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