

Butterfly Life Cycle

Butterflies have a complete life cycle with four separate stages.

1



What happens during the first stage?

The new butterfly starts life as a very small egg on a leaf. Eggs can be round, oval or cylindrical and some are ribbed.

2



What happens during the second stage?

A caterpillar (or larva) hatches. They have patterns, stripes or patches and are sometimes hairy. The caterpillar needs to eat lots to grow.

3



What happens during the third stage?

The caterpillar forms a chrysalis (or pupa). It is usually brown or green. The caterpillar starts to grow wings.

4



What happens during the fourth stage?

It is now an adult and usually learns to fly in 3 or 4 hours. The adults also mate and the female butterflies lay eggs, beginning the life cycle again.

Photo courtesy of (A.Poulous (Iya)@flickr.com) - granted under creative commons licence - attribution

Questions about the Butterfly Cycle

First Stage

1. What does the new butterfly start life as?

2. The eggs can be round, and what else?

Second Stage

3. What hatches in the second stage?

4. What does the caterpillar need to do?

Third Stage

5. What colour is the chrysalis (or pupa)?

6. What does the caterpillar start to grow?

Fourth Stage

7. What is it now?

8. How long does it usually take the butterfly to learn how to fly?

Questions about the Butterfly Cycle

Answers

1. What does the new butterfly start life as?

The new butterfly starts life as a very small egg on a leaf.

2. The eggs can be round and what else?

Eggs can be round, oval or cylindrical and some are ribbed.

3. What hatches in the second stage?

A caterpillar (or larva) hatches.

4. What does the caterpillar need to do?

The caterpillar needs to eat lots to grow.

5. What colour is the chrysalis (or pupa)?

It is usually brown or green.

6. What does the caterpillar start to grow?

It starts to grow wings.

7. What is it now?

It is now an adult butterfly.

8. How long does it usually take the butterfly to learn how to fly?

It usually learns to fly in 3 or 4 hours.

Butterfly Life Cycle

Butterflies and moths are advanced insects, because they go through a complete metamorphosis. This means that they change completely. They have a life cycle with four separate stages.

1



What happens during the first stage?

During the first stage of the butterfly life cycle, the female butterfly lays her eggs, most often onto a leaf. The new butterfly starts life as a very small egg. They can be round, oval or cylindrical and some are ribbed.

2



What happens during the second stage?

During the second stage, a caterpillar (or larva) hatches. It is the long, worm-like stage of the butterfly life cycle. Most caterpillars have patterns, stripes or patches and sometimes spine-like hairs. In this stage, the caterpillar needs to eat lots to grow. As it gets bigger, it sheds its skin four or more times.

3



What happens during the third stage?

During the third stage, the caterpillar forms a chrysalis (or pupa) which is usually brown or green so it is camouflaged. This is the transformation stage, when it starts to grow wings.

4



What happens during the fourth stage?

The caterpillar changes into a colourful adult butterfly. When it first emerges, its wings are soft and folded against its body because it had to fit inside the pupa. The butterfly rests and then blood pumps into its wings and they start working and flapping. The butterfly usually learns to fly in 3 or 4 hours. The adults also mate and the female butterflies lay eggs, beginning the life cycle again.

Photo courtesy of (A.Poulous (Iya)@flickr.com) - granted under creative commons licence - attribution

Questions about the Butterfly Cycle

1. How many stages are there in a butterfly's life cycle?

2. What shape can the butterfly eggs be?

3. What hatches in the second stage?

4. What do caterpillars look like?

5. What happens to the caterpillar's skin?

6. What colour is the chrysalis (or pupa)?

7. What does it grow during the pupa stage, before it becomes a butterfly?

8. What does the caterpillar change into?

9. How long does it usually take the butterfly to learn how to fly?

Questions About the Butterfly Cycle

Answers

1. How many stages are there in a butterfly's life cycle?

They have four separate stages.

2. What shape can the butterfly eggs be?

They can be round, oval or cylindrical and some are ribbed.

3. What hatches in the second stage?

During the second stage, a caterpillar (or larva) hatches.

4. What do caterpillars look like?

Most caterpillars have patterns, stripes or patches and sometimes spine-like hairs.

5. What happens to the caterpillar's skin?

As it gets bigger, it sheds its skin four or more times.

6. What colour is the chrysalis (or pupa)?

A chrysalis (or pupa) is usually brown or green.

7. What does it grow during the pupa stage, before it becomes a butterfly?

It starts to grow wings.

8. What does the caterpillar change into?

The chrysalis changes into a colourful adult butterfly.

9. How long does it usually take the butterfly to learn how to fly?

The butterfly usually learns to fly in 3 or 4 hours.

Butterfly Life Cycle

Butterflies and moths are advanced insects, because they go through a complete metamorphosis. This means that they change completely. They have a complete life cycle with four separate stages. Each stage is different and happens for a reason.



What happens during the first stage?

During the first stage of the butterfly life cycle, the female butterfly lays her eggs onto a leaf, stem or another object. The new butterfly starts life as a very small egg. The eggs can be round, oval or cylindrical and some are ribbed. The shape depends on the type of butterfly that has laid the egg. If you look really closely, you can actually see the caterpillar growing inside the egg.



What happens during the second stage?

During the second stage, a caterpillar (or larva) hatches. It is the long, worm-like stage of the butterfly life cycle. Most caterpillars have interesting patterns, stripes or patches and sometimes spine-like hairs. In this stage, the caterpillar needs to eat lots to grow. The caterpillar usually starts by eating the leaf they were born onto. They do not stay in this stage for long. As it gets bigger, the caterpillar sheds its skin four or more times.



What happens during the third stage?

During the third stage, the caterpillar forms a chrysalis (or pupa) which is usually brown or green so it is camouflaged. Many hibernate during the winter at this stage. This is the transformation stage, when the caterpillar tissues are broken down and the adult's insect structures are formed, including growing wings. From the outside, it can look like it is just resting, but inside the pupa, it is changing rapidly as the metamorphosis happens.



What happens during the fourth stage?

The caterpillar transforms into a colourful adult butterfly. When it first emerges, its wings are soft and folded against its body because it had to fit inside the pupa. The butterfly rests and then blood pumps into its wings and they start working and flapping. The butterfly usually learns to fly in 3 or 4 hours. This is the reproductive and active stage. This is usually when the adult butterfly migrates or moves to a new habitat. The adults also mate and the female butterflies lay eggs, beginning the life cycle again.

Photo courtesy of (A.Poulous (Iya)@flickr.com) - granted under creative commons licence - attribution

Questions about the Butterfly Cycle

1. Why are butterflies advanced insects?

2. What shape can the butterfly egg be and what does it depend on?

3. What can you see inside the egg if you look really closely?

4. What does the caterpillar need to do in the second stage?

5. What happens to the caterpillar's skin?

6. What happens during the caterpillar's transformation?

7. What can it look like the caterpillar is doing from outside the pupa and what is happening inside?

8. What is the fourth stage of the butterfly life cycle called and where does the butterfly go?

9. What are the wings like when the butterfly first emerges and why?

10. What does the butterfly usually learn to do in 3 or 4 hours?

Questions about the Butterfly Cycle

Answers

1. Why are butterflies advanced insects?

Butterflies are advanced insects because they go through a complete metamorphosis.

2. What shape can the butterfly egg be and what does it depend on?

They can be round, oval or cylindrical and some are ribbed. The shape depends on the type of butterfly that laid the egg.

3. What can you see inside the egg if you look really closely?

If you look really closely, you can actually see the caterpillar growing inside the egg.

4. What does the caterpillar need to do in the second stage?

In this stage, the caterpillar needs to eat lots to grow.

5. What happens to the caterpillar's skin?

As it gets bigger, it sheds its skin four or more times.

6. What happens during the caterpillar's transformation?

This is the transformation stage, when the caterpillar tissues are broken down and the adult's insect structures are formed, including growing wings.

7. What can it look like the caterpillar is doing from outside the pupa and what is happening inside?

From the outside, it can look like it is just resting, but inside the pupa, it is changing rapidly as the metamorphosis happens.

8. What is the fourth stage of the butterfly life cycle called and where does the butterfly go?

The fourth stage is called the adult butterfly stage. This is usually when the adult butterfly migrates or moves to a new habitat.

9. What are the wings like when the butterfly first emerges and why?

When it first emerges, its wings are soft and folded against its body because it had to fit inside the pupa.

10. What does the butterfly usually learn to do in 3 or 4 hours?

The butterfly usually learns to fly in 3 or 4 hours.