Reproduction in Fish

Female fish usually lay eggs (spawn) once a year. After the female has laid her eggs, the males cover the eggs with sperm. The sperm is produced in special glands. This is called external fertilisation. When the eggs are fertilised, larvae are produced and from the larvae come fish. The parent fish do not look after the young fish. The fish must produce thousands of eggs to make sure that some young fish survive.

 fish larvae

Sharks

In some types of fish fertilisation happens internally – the fish need less eggs. In sharks for example, male sharks use claspers (these have evolved from their pelvic fins) to insert sperm into the female. This is internal fertilisation.

In most sharks the eggs hatch and the babies grow inside their mothers. The babies get food from the yolk of the egg and from their mother’s glands. The babies are then live born.



In some sharks, the eggs grow outside the body in an especially hard case. For example, the Port Jackson shark.