

Create a Butterfly Life Cycle

Discover how a butterfly grows with a hands-on craft!

Materials Needed:

Paper circle or paper plate, markers, rice, pom-poms, brown paper, butterfly picture (printed or draw your own), scissors, glue. Adapt other materials to represent life stages, as needed.

Instructions:

Divide your circle or plate into four sections. Decorate each with a stage of a butterfly's life.

Eggs: Glue a few grains of **rice**.

Caterpillar: Glue **pom-poms**.

Chrysalis: Crumple up a piece of **brown paper**.

Adult: Color and glue a **butterfly picture**!



To grow into an adult, a butterfly goes through four stages: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis), and adult.

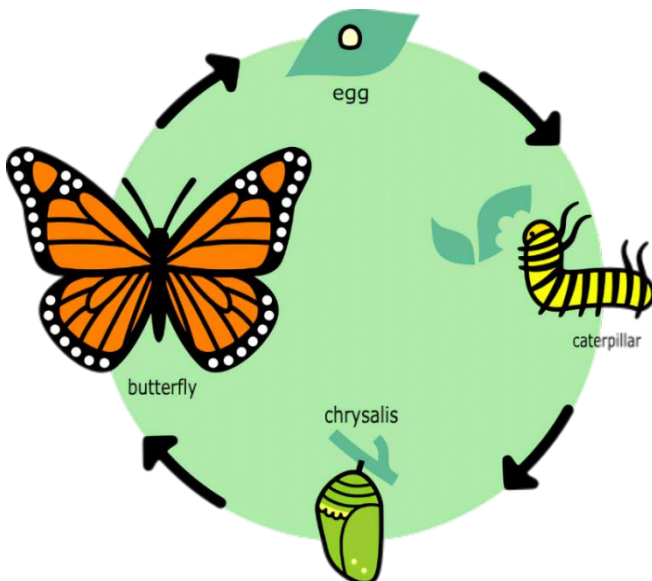


Image: Wikimedia Commons.



Print this butterfly or draw your own!

Butterflies in Alaska

Bees are not the only insects that pollinate flowers! Flies, moths, beetles, wasps, and butterflies are all important pollinators.



Fritillary. Image: Beatriz Moisset,
US Forest Service.

Because they have small bodies and thin legs, butterflies are less efficient at moving pollen than bees. However, they still pollinate many wildflowers, including salvias and sunflowers. Butterflies often visit round flowers with flared petals that lead to narrow throats that conceal nectar. Butterflies land on the wide petals, then delicately probe the flower's *nectary* (the gland that produces nectar) with their long *proboscis* (tongue).

Did You Know? Butterflies typically visit brightly colored flowers. They are one of the few insects able to see red! Butterflies have good vision but a weak sense of smell.

There are about 80 species of butterflies in Alaska. They have many adaptations to help survive in cold Arctic environments:

- **Overwintering:** In the winter, some butterflies will go dormant, lying inactive under the snow. Different species may overwinter at different life stages. In Alaska, six species overwinter as adults. They produce a special anti-freezing chemical that prevents ice crystals forming in their bodies.
- **Longer Life Cycles:** A caterpillar cannot grow much in a short Arctic summer, so they live for several years as larva (hibernating in the winter) until they are big enough to develop into an adult butterfly.
- **Staying Warm:** Butterflies need to absorb sunlight to stay warm. Each species has a preferred way of basking in the sun. Some spread their wings out, while others fold them at specific angles.



Mourning Cloak butterfly.
Image: Wikimedia Commons.

Discover more about Alaska butterflies: kenphilipcollection.alaska.edu