

Identifying coral type using the Coral Health Chart

CoralWatch



Branching (BR)



Boulder (BO)



Plate (PL)



Soft (SO)

The Coral Health Chart uses four coral types to classify corals. **Branching** refers to any branching coral, such as *Acropora* and *Pocillopora* species. **Boulder** refers to any massive or rounded corals, such as some *Platygyra* and *Porites* species. **Plate** refers to any coral that forms a plate-like shape, such as tabular *Acropora* species, and the **soft** category refers to corals lacking a hard skeleton, e.g. *Sarcophytum* species.

Instructions

1. Copy the coral type template on a waterproof slate.
2. Locate a colony of coral, observe it and record the coral type. Use the types described on the Coral Health Chart.
3. Sketch the coral.
4. List any marine organisms that you observe near the coral.
5. Answer the following questions:
 - a. Are there mainly soft or hard corals in your local area?
 - b. In which zone do most corals appear to be?
 - c. What is the most common coral growth form?
 - d. What is the most common species of coral? Use your coral ID card.

CORAL TYPES	
Branching	Boulder
Plate	Soft

Identifying coral type using the Coral Health Chart

The **aim** of this activity is to identify coral types using the Coral Health Chart.

ACARA curriculum links

Science understanding (ACSSU111)

Science as human endeavour (ACSHE119, ACSHE223)

Science inquiry skills (ACSIS125, ACSIS126)

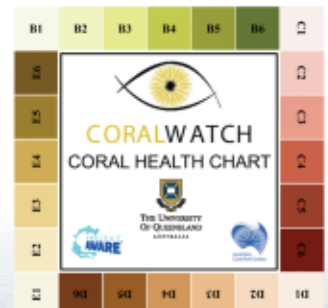


Instructions

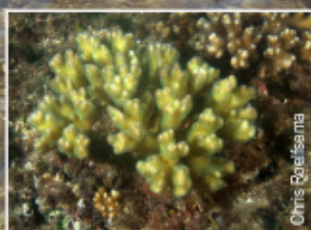
- This activity should be conducted at low tide.
- Because identifying coral species is very difficult, CoralWatch classifies coral types in easy identifiable groups. For this purpose, coral types are described by the overall shape ('growth form') of coral colonies. There are hundreds of different coral species, each with unique shapes and colours. Sometimes the colour or shape may not clearly match the options on the Coral Health Chart. If it is difficult to select a colour or coral type, simply record the closest match. If a particular coral is too difficult to classify, just skip this coral and move on to the next one.
- CoralWatch classifies most free living, tabular, encrusting and foliaceous corals as plates.
- CoralWatch classifies most digitate, bushy and staghorn corals as branching.

Equipment

- Booties, hat and sunscreen
- Coral Health Chart
- Waterproof slate or paper with pencil
- Underwater camera (if available)
- Viewing tube (if available)
- Waterproof ID guide (if available)
- ID reference books (if available)



BOULDER CORAL



BRANCHING CORAL



PLATE CORAL



SOFT CORAL