

Can a cuttlefish disappear in a living room?

A cuttlefish is a common sea animal with an amazing ability to change appearance. Are there any limits to this ability? Watch this video to find out.

Tasks

Do the preparation task first. Then watch the video and do the exercises. You can also read the transcript.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. a cuttlefish
2. camouflage
3. a predator
4. to blend in
5. chequerboard
6. a chaise longue
7. to do something 'a treat'
8. underneath

Definition

- a. an animal that kills and eats other animals
- b. to change colour or appearance to look similar to the surroundings
- c. a sea animal with eight arms and two tentacles (similar to an octopus)
- d. to do something very well (colloquial British English)
- e. a long, low seat which is similar to a sofa
- f. the colour or shape of an animal that makes it difficult for others to see it
- g. under or below
- h. a design of black and white squares

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answers	
1. The cuttlefish can change its colour but not its shape.	True	False
2. The cuttlefish uses camouflage so that big fish don't eat it.	True	False
3. The presenter wants to investigate if a cuttlefish can blend into a simpler environment.	True	False
4. The presenter says that the cuttlefish blends into the chequerboard floor very badly.	True	False
5. The presenter says that the cuttlefish blends into the chaise longue very well.	True	False
6. The conclusion of the video is that cuttlefish always blend into the items in front of them.	True	False

Task 2

Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

beginnings	challenging	predators	texture	treat	underneath
------------	-------------	-----------	---------	-------	------------

1. They can change their colour, shape and to blend in with the background.
2. It's perfect for hiding from both and prey.
3. I want to see how the cuttlefish tackle something a bit more
4. There's definitely the of a chequerboard there.
5. He's blending into the chaise longue a
6. He's not camouflaged with what he can see in front of him, he's camouflaged with what's him.

Discussion

What other amazing abilities do animals have?

Transcript

The cuttlefish has taken camouflage to the next level. They can change their colour, shape and texture to blend in with the background. It's hard to believe it, looking at these pictures, but all these cuttlefish are exactly the same species. They're simply changing their appearance, depending on what's around them. It's called 'adaptive camouflage' and it's perfect for hiding from both predators and prey.

But can the cuttlefish adapt to anything?

Really, you must applaud the cuttlefish for its amazing ability to blend into its surroundings. But, how clever is that, really? I mean, vanishing amongst things that are around it all the time. It's one thing for a cuttlefish to camouflage itself against seaweed, sand, pebbles and stuff like that. But how would they fare camouflaging themselves against something a bit more complicated? Something a bit like this!

(curtains open)

Yeah, I know, it's hardly *Grand Designs*. But I've gone for this rather lurid décor for good reason: I want to see how the cuttlefish tackle something a bit more challenging, so I've chosen stripes, chessboard and some old-style chintz.

OK, time to see how they cope.

(the cuttlefish enters the tank)

Let's get our cuttlefish settled in and dim down the lights.

He's having a look at it.

And he's gone straight for the big one: the chequerboard flooring. And amazingly, I think he's having a crack at it.

There's definitely the beginnings of a chequerboard there. He's not quite lined up right, but, you know, still impressive.

Right, what next? Zebra-skin rug? Now he's improvising.

Let's get him back to the task in hand. Now that's more like it! He's blending into the chaise longue a treat. But notice one thing: he's not camouflaged with what he can see in front of him, he's camouflaged with what's underneath him.

Answers

Preparation task

1. c
2. f
3. a
4. b
5. h
6. e
7. d
8. g

Task 1

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. False

Task 2

1. texture
2. predators
3. challenging
4. beginnings
5. treat
6. underneath