

## Ocean Food Chain

The ocean is an inhospitable place for humans, but many animals call it home. Every living thing within the oceans is part of a larger food chain. From the tiniest algae to the most enormous whale, everything serves a purpose. Most species in the food chain are both a predator and a prey. This is just one example of the diverse food web that exists underwater.

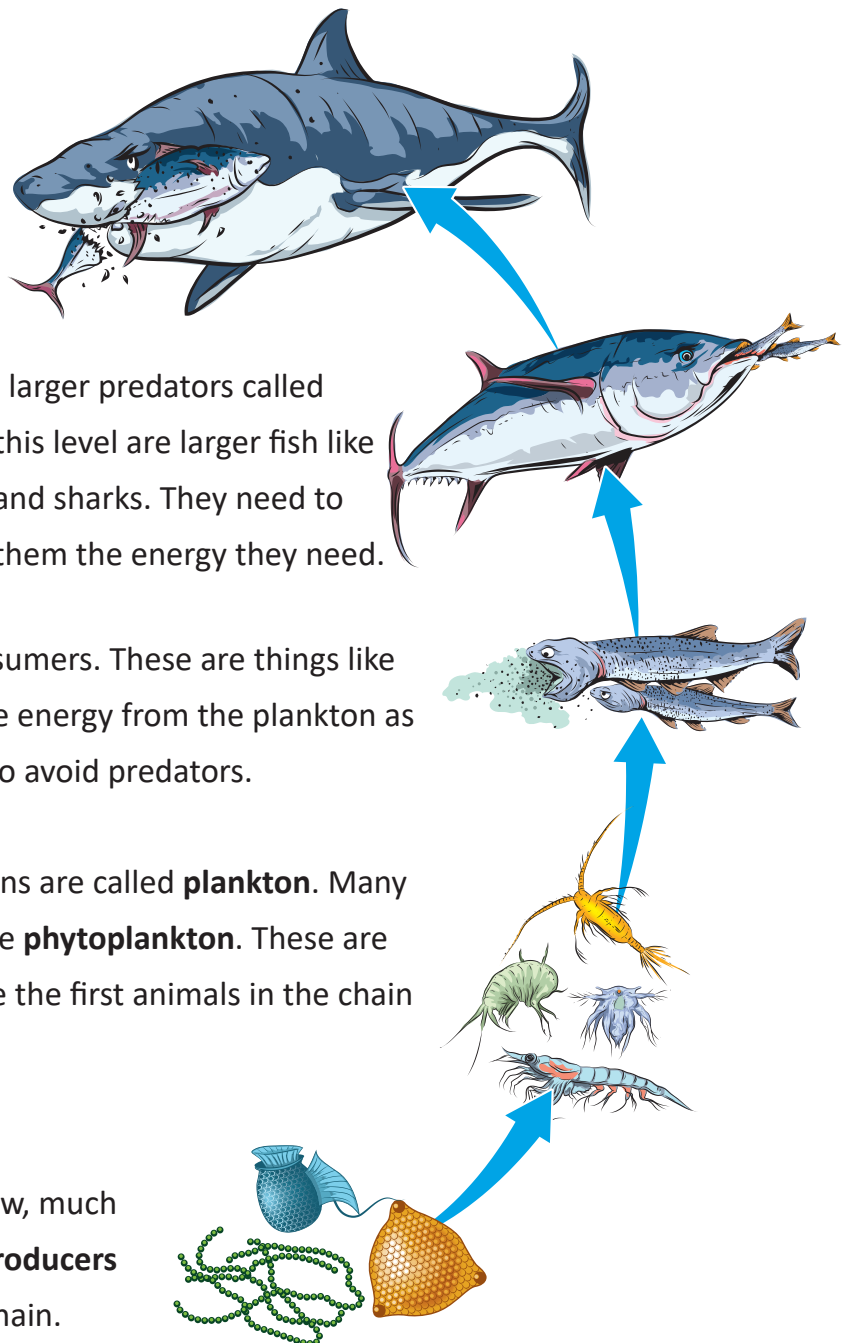
**Apex predators** are at the top of the food chain. They don't have any natural predators. They do still contribute to the food chain. When they die, their bodies feed the **phytoplankton**.

**Secondary consumers** are eaten by even larger predators called **tertiary consumers**. Ocean predators at this level are larger fish like tuna and swordfish, and smaller whales and sharks. They need to consume a large amount of prey to give them the energy they need.

**Secondary consumers** eat primary consumers. These are things like small fish, turtles and rays. They use the energy from the plankton as fuel. They have developed many ways to avoid predators.

Krill, shrimp and other tiny crustaceans are called **plankton**. Many of them are microscopic. They eat the **phytoplankton**. These are **primary consumers** because they are the first animals in the chain to eat something else.

Algae, corals and bacteria are called **phytoplankton**. They use sunlight to grow, much like plants on land. These are **primary producers** because they are at the bottom of the chain.



## RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What are things at the bottom of a food chain called?
2. Give an example of one of these.
3. Write a definition of a primary consumer?
4. Find an example of an animal that might eat a **secondary consumer**.
5. Complete the sentence: Most species in the food chain are both a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_.

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**V**

Which word tells you that humans can't live in the ocean?

**I**

Why do you think secondary consumers have developed ways to avoid predators?

**S**

Which stages of the food chain are both predator and prey?

**V**

Find a word that means something is too small to see without technology.

**E**

Why is the **apex predator** at the top of the diagram? Do you think the author did this intentionally?