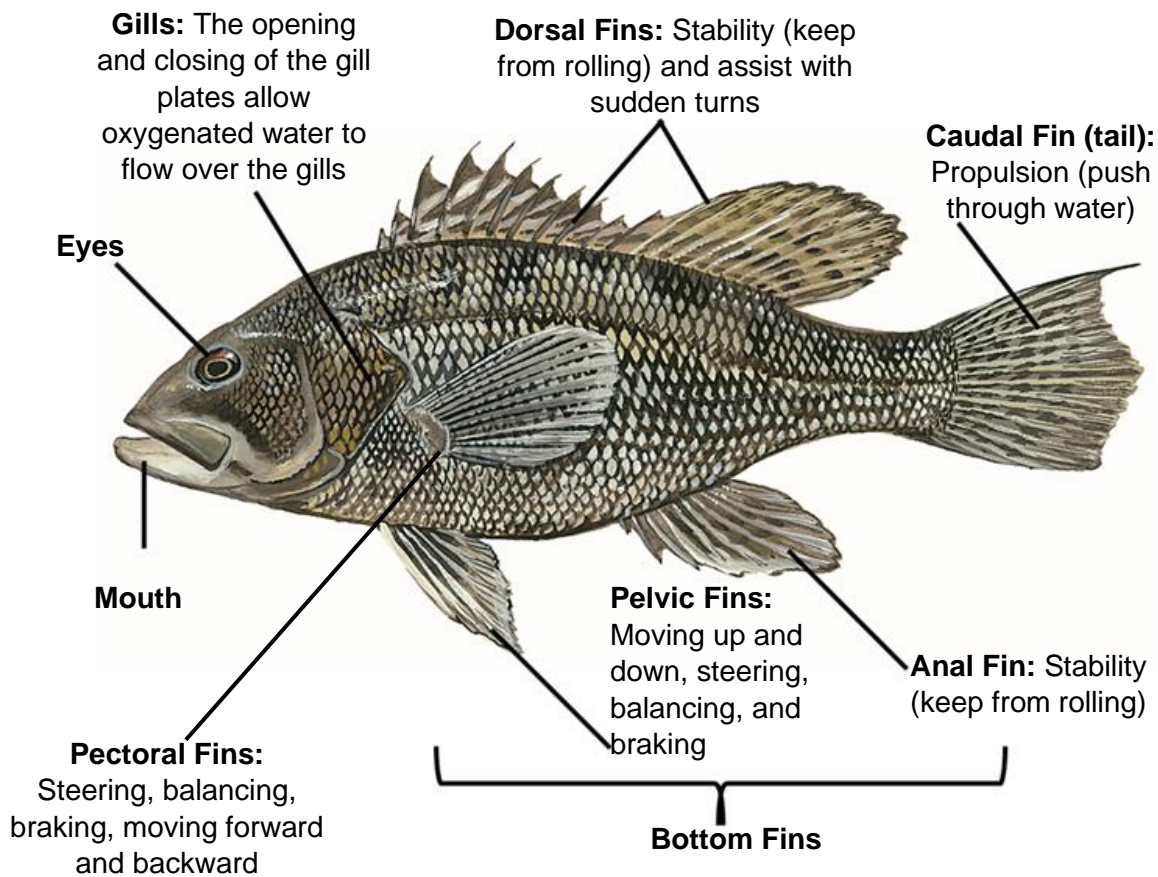


# Build-A-Fish Activity



The Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean are home to many different species of fish. Their individual features can tell us how they have adapted to the environment over time, determining what kind of habitat they live in, what they eat, and how they swim.

Before you begin to build your own fish, take some time to learn about the different shapes and locations of fish features. For more information about species that can be found in the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean, visit Delaware Fish Facts at <https://fishspecies.dnrec.delaware.gov/>.



## Tail Shape

1. **Squared:** Strong swimmers that can move around easily but are not quick when doing so.
2. **Forked:** Fast swimmers, but do not swim fast all the time. The deeper the fork of the tail, the faster the fish can swim.
3. **Crescent:** Fast, strong swimmers that are constantly on the move and can maintain fast speeds for long amounts of time. This shape is helpful in out-running larger predators.
4. **Heterocercal:** Top of the tail fin is longer than the bottom, may exert strong downward thrust.



## Types of Mouths

1. **In the Middle:** Mouth is located in the middle of the head, opening straight out. The location allows fish to feed in mid-water. They feed on the move and generally grab bits of food they pass or other fish they chase down. An example of a fish with a terminal mouth is a weakfish.
2. **Upturned:** Long, lower jaw with mouth opening toward the top of the head. This type of mouth allows the fish to catch insects or other prey that live on or close to the surface above it. An example of a fish with an upturned mouth is an Atlantic menhaden.
3. **Downturned:** A fish with a downturned mouth looks for food below it. If a fish has this type of mouth, it usually feeds on smaller fish and crustaceans on or near the ocean or bay floor. An example of a fish with a downturned mouth is a black drum.
4. **On the Underside:** On the underside of the head. Fish with this type of mouth look for food below it, often on the surface of the ocean or bay floor. For example, the Atlantic sturgeon has a mouth on the underside of its head and uses its barbels (whisker-like organs) to search for food, like snails, mussels, and clams.



### Materials needed for the activity below

Build-A-Fish Printable Sheets      Scissors      Glue or Tape

Coloring materials (crayons, markers, etc.)      Sheet of paper or cardboard



## Build-A-Fish Activity

When selecting different features, think about how you want your fish to survive. Do you want your fish to eat on the ocean floor or in mid-water? Do you want it to be a fast or slow swimmer? Think about these characteristics while building your fish and be sure to answer the follow-up questions when you are finished. Use the images provided to choose and cut out the parts of your fish.

- 1. Cut out the fish body shape**-Draw scales to cover your fish
- 2. Choose one fin for the top of your fish** (Dorsal Fin)
- 3. Choose fins for the bottom of your fish** (Pelvic and Anal Fins)
- 4. Choose a fin for the side of your fish** (Pectoral Fin) Remember that your fish has another fin on the other side of its body, but we can not see it from here.
- 5. Choose a tail for your fish** (Caudal Fin) – consider how you want your fish to swim when choosing the tail
- 6. Choose a mouth for your fish** – consider what your fish will be eating when choosing the mouth
- 7.** Glue the fish body to a piece of paper or cardboard.
- 8.** After choosing the parts for your fish, glue the fish parts on the body using the guide on page 1.
- 9.** Color and decorate your fish and habitat. Don't forget to add gills - your fish needs to breathe! Remember that the habitat needs to be compatible with the features you picked out for your fish.

## Follow-Up Questions

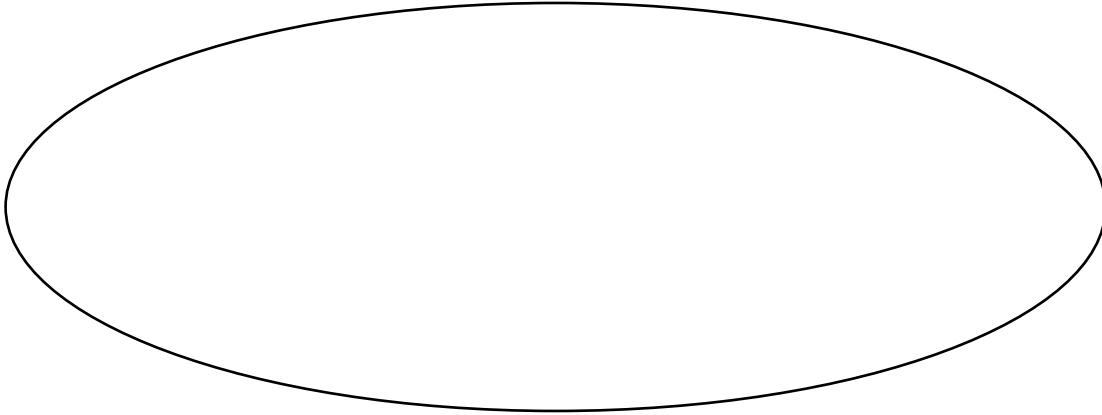
1. What type of tail did you give your fish? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is your fish a fast or slow swimmer? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What type of mouth did you give your fish? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Based on the mouth you gave your fish, where does your fish get its food and what do you think your fish eats?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What type of habitat did you draw around your fish? Do the features you gave your fish fit the habitat you created?  
\_\_\_\_\_

For more information about fish or if you would like more information about the programs and activities offered by the DuPont Nature Center, stop by the nature center or visit our website: <http://de.gov/dnc>



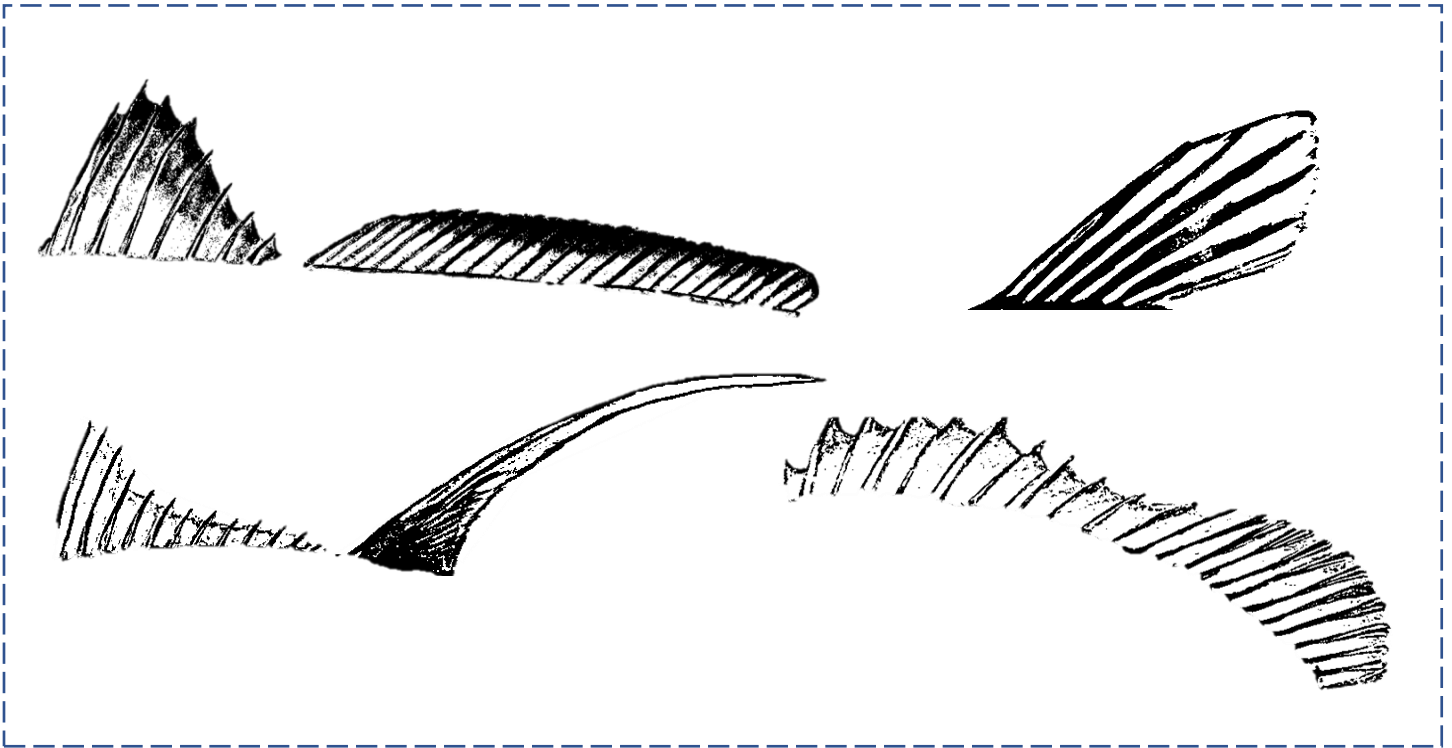
# Build-A-Fish Printable Sheets

## Fish Body



## Dorsal Fins

Remember: Dorsal fins help fish to not roll in the water and assist with sudden turns the fish might make when trying to escape a predator.



## Pelvic Fins

Remember: Pelvic fins are responsible for moving the fish up and down, steering, balancing, and braking.



## Anal Fins

Remember: Like the dorsal fin, the anal fin helps keep the fish stabilized.

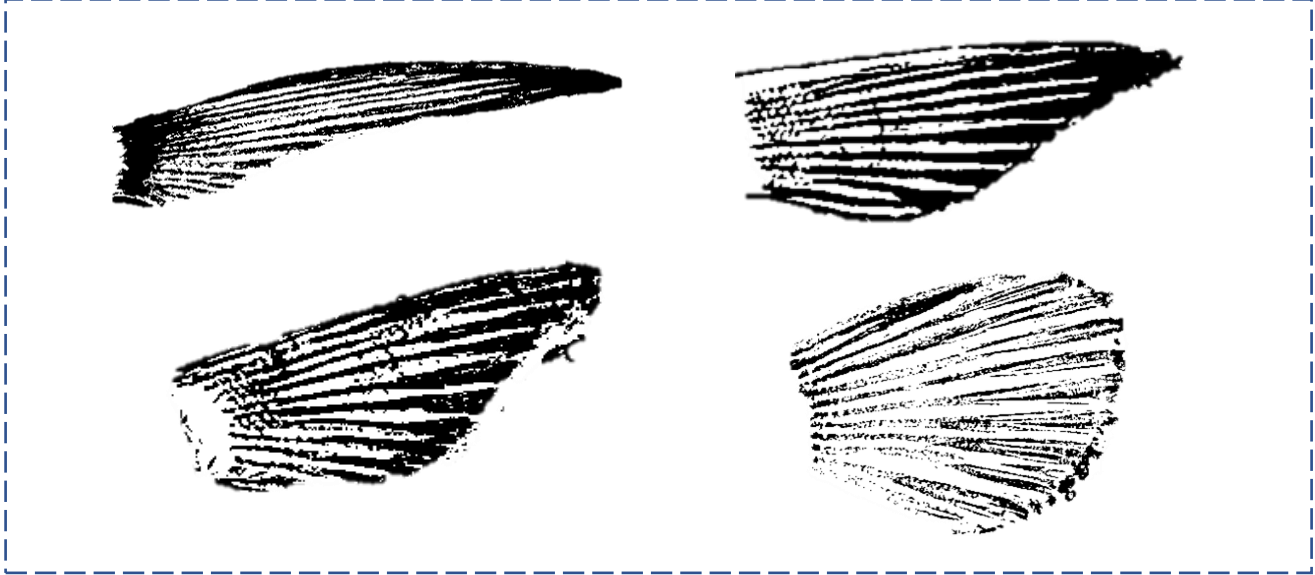


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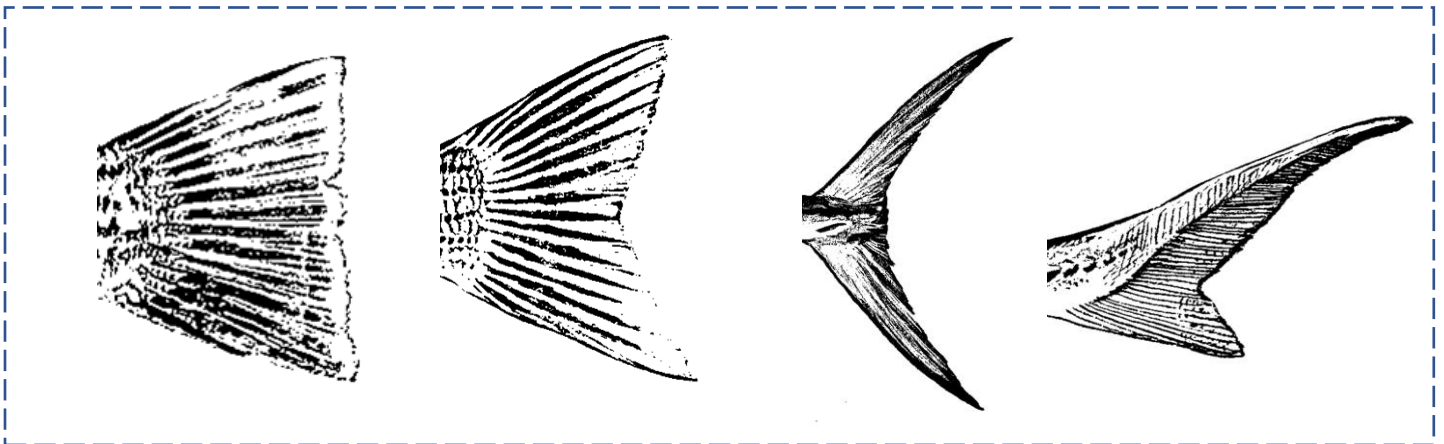
## Pectoral Fins

Remember: Pectoral fins have many responsibilities like steering, balancing, braking, and moving forward and backward.



## Caudal (Tail) Fins

Remember: Caudal fins push a fish through the water. Tails vary in shape and those shapes can determine how fast or slow a fish can swim.



## Mouths

Remember: Mouth types determine what and where a fish eats. Knowing what type of mouth they have can also tell you what type of habitat they live in.

