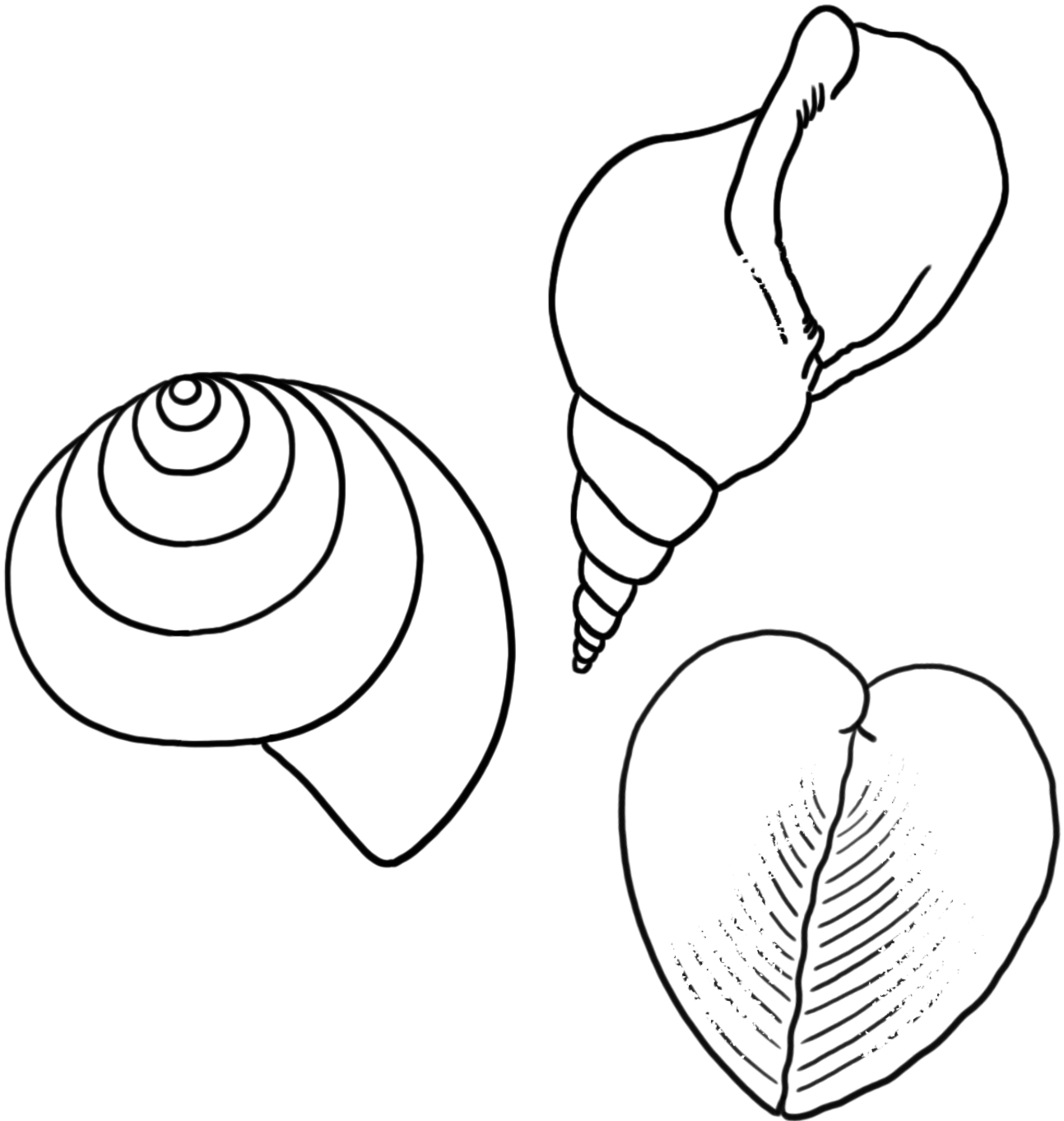


Design your own shell pattern!

A mollusk licks over its shell edge, 'drawing' patterns as it makes its shell bigger. Design your own shell patterns that stand out from the crowd. You could draw stripes or triangles, zigzags or spots, scribbles or squiggles!

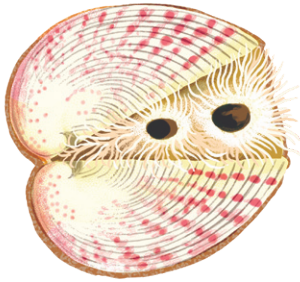


It's a mystery why mollusks draw patterns on their shells! Scientists think mollusks might write messages to remind themselves of where they need to add more layers to their hard shells so that they don't grow all wonky and out of shape.

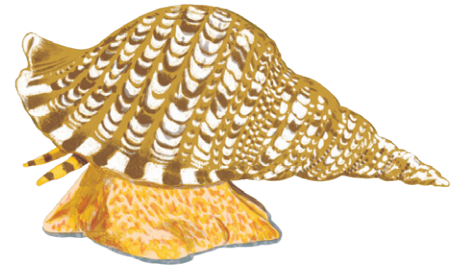
*Why not write
a secret message
in your pattern?*

Be a Shell Detective

You can tell a lot about a shell from looking at it. On your next walk or trip to the beach, take a closer look at the shells you find. With these clues, what can you discover?



SHAPE
Look at its shape.
What type of shell is it?



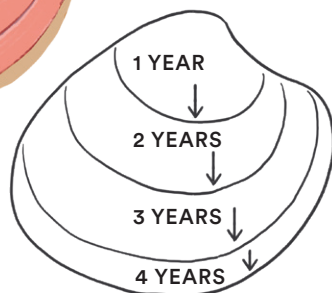
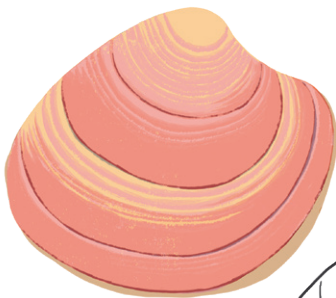
If it has a spiralling shape then it's a gastropod, which means 'stomach foot'.

If a shell comes in two parts that fit together then it's a bivalve, meaning 'two doors'.



AGE
How old is your shell?

TEXTURE
Run your fingers over it.
Is it rough or smooth or bumpy?



Some shells have rings or ridges that you can see or feel. Count the dark rings to tell how old it is.



Bumpy and rough shells help seaweed and sponges grow to hide them from predators. Smooth shells can help snails dig into sand quickly.

What else do you notice about your shell?
