

Head

The part of the insect that contains the brain, two compound eyes, the proboscis and the pharynx (the start of the digestive system). The two antennae are attached to the head.

Fore-wing

The fore wings are the two upper wings.

The Coupling of Wings: During flight, the fore-wing and hind-wing are held together and function as one wing. The coupling mechanism differs in different species.

Thorax

The body section between the head and the abdomen. The legs and wings are attached to the thorax.

Hind-wing

The hind wings are the two lower wings.

Wings At Rest: When at rest, butterflies hold their wings vertically.

Abdomen

The segmented tail area of an insect that contains vital organs such as the heart, Malpighian tubules, reproductive organs and most of the digestive system.



The Egg Stage

A butterfly starts life as a very small, round, oval or cylindrical egg, usually laid on the leaves of plants.

Some butterfly eggs may be round, some oval and some may be ribbed while others may have other features. The egg shape depends on the type of butterfly that laid the egg.



The Larva (Caterpillar)

Butterfly larvae are actually what we call caterpillars. Caterpillars do not stay in this stage for very long and mostly, in this stage, all they do is eat.

When a caterpillar is born, they are extremely small. When they start eating, they instantly start growing and expanding. Their exoskeleton (skin) does not stretch or grow, so they grow by "molting" (shedding the outgrown skin) several times while it grows.



The Pupa (Cocoon)

As soon as a caterpillar is done growing and they have reached their full length/weight, they form themselves into a pupa, also known as a chrysalis.

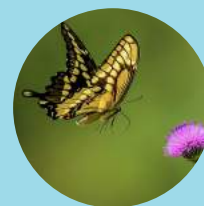
Within the chrysalis, the old body parts of the caterpillar are undergoing a remarkable transformation, called 'metamorphosis,' to become the beautiful parts that make up the butterfly that will emerge.



The Adult Butterfly

Finally, when the caterpillar has done all of its forming and changing inside the pupa, an adult butterfly emerges.

When the butterfly first emerges from the chrysalis, both of the wings are going to be soft and folded against its body. This is because the butterfly had to fit all its new parts inside of the pupa.



Taking Flight

As soon as the butterfly has rested after coming out of the chrysalis, it will pump blood into the wings in order to get them working and flapping – then they get to fly. Usually, within a three or four-hour period, the butterfly will master flying and will search for a mate in order to reproduce.

When in the fourth and final stage of their lives, adult butterflies are constantly on the lookout to reproduce and when a female lays their eggs on some leaves, the butterfly life cycle will start all over.