SHELL KEY

This guide is not intended to be comprehensive; it is a broad representation of conspicuous animals that may be found in estuaries and shores in the UK. Images are not to scale.

Start

This Key is for Animals with a Hard Shell or casing

= **Non-native species**

Is it permanently attached to a surface?
- No → Is there mother of pearl inside the shell opening?
  - No → Is there a groove or teeth in the shell opening
    - No → Is it long, thin and cone shaped like a unicorn's horn?
      - No → Does it have 6 or more whorls (twists)?
        - No → It could be a type of **periwinkle**
          - Common periwinkle (*Littorina littorea*) — Dark stripes on body; White 'Collar'
          - Rough periwinkle (*Littorina saxatilis*) — Roughly 'ribbed' shell. Very high up shore
          - Flat periwinkle (*Littorina* sp) — Flattened spire
        - Yes → It could be a **spire shell**
          - (*Hydrobia* sp) — Actual size
      - Yes → It could be a **turret shell**
        - (*Turitella communis*)
    - Yes → It could be a type of **whelk**
      - Common whelk (*Buccinum undatum*) — Brown, speckled body
      - Netted dog whelk (*Nassarius reticulatus*) — Egg capsules
      - Dog whelk (*Nucella lapillus*)
  - Yes → It could be a type of **topshell**
    - Painted topshell (*Calliostoma zizyphinum*) — Underside; 'Tooth inside opening
    - Thick top shell (*Osilinus lineatus*)
- Yes → It could be a type of **spiral worm**
  - (*Spirorbis* sp)

Is it spiraled?
- No → Is the shell in 2 parts?
  - Yes → It could be a type of **bivalve**
    - Great scallop (*Pecten maximus*)
    - Common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*)
    - Razor shell (*Ensis* sp)
    - Common otter-shell (*Lutraria lutraria*) — Shell can be very large and doesn't fully close
    - Peppery furrow shell (*Scrobicularia plana*) — Flat, rounded shell
    - Bean-like tellin (*Fabulina fabula*) — Wedge-shaped shell
    - Pacific oyster (*Crassostrea gigas*) — Elongated and deep-bodied with large 'frills'
    - Native oyster (*Ostrea edulis*) — Round and flat with fine 'frills'
    - Common mussel (*Mytilus edulis*)
  - No → Is the shell a dome or cone shape?
    - No → It could be a **keel worm**
      - (*Pomatoceros* sp)
    - Yes → Does it have an opening on top?
      - Yes → It could be a type of **barnacle**
        - An acorn barnacle
        - Volcano barnacle (*Balanus perforatus*)
      - No → It could be a type of **limpet**
        - Limpet (*Patella* sp)
        - Slipper limpet (*Crepidula fornicata*) — underside of shell
- Yes → Is the case made from sand grains?
  - Yes → It could be a **sand mason worm**
    - (*Lanice conchilega*)
  - No → Is the case round and spiny?
    - Yes → It could be a type of **sea urchin**
      - Green sea urchin (*Psammechinus miliaris*) — Empty shell

If you still can't identify what you have found, it may be something not shown on this guide; try sketching or taking a photo of your find and look it up when you get home. You may find the MarLIN website helpful: ***www.marlin.ac.uk***

Warming seas, non-native species and human activities are all affecting our oceans. Help us to spot changes by telling us what you see on the shore at ***www.mba.ac.uk/rml.***

This key is an extract from '*A Guide to Exploring Estuarine Plants and Animals*', which was produced by the MBA on behalf of the Exe Estuary Partnership with funding from the Crown Estate

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