



Oyster Farming in the Bay

Learn about Oyster Aquaculture in the Chesapeake Bay and enjoy a craft activity.



Many people enjoy eating oysters. They can be grilled, fried, baked, broiled, boiled, or eaten raw (uncooked).



Photo credit: Chesapeake Bay Magazine

Whether or not you eat oysters, they are an important part of the Chesapeake Bay. Oysters are filter feeders. As water flows through their gills, oysters filter out algae to eat. As they eat, oysters help to clean the water in the Bay.



Photo credit: Chesapeake Bay Foundation

For hundreds of years, oysters have been harvested from the Chesapeake Bay. Over time, the number of wild oysters in the Bay has drastically declined due to overfishing, pollution, and disease. Fewer oysters in the Bay means fewer oysters for people to eat, and fewer oysters to help keep the Bay clean.



Satellite view of Chesapeake Bay

Oyster Aquaculture, or Oyster Farming, is one solution to this problem. Instead of fishing for wild oysters, some watermen have started growing and harvesting oysters like a crop. Tiny oysters called seeds are grown in tanks. When the oysters grow big enough, they are moved into floating cages in the Bay where they continue to eat algae and filter Bay water. After about one year the adult oysters are harvested and sold to people across the United States. Farm-grown oysters are helping wild oysters to keep the Bay clean for everyone.



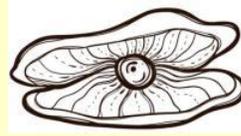
Photo credit: Chesapeake Bay Foundation

To watch videos about oyster farming in the Chesapeake Bay click [here](#) and [here](#).

<https://tinyurl.com/6u9cfspv>
<https://tinyurl.com/5sxtubus>



When an oyster gets an irritating piece of sand inside its shell, it makes a smooth substance called **nacre** around the rough piece of sand. When several layers of nacre are produced by the oyster, a pearl is made. Pearls are rare. It can take an oyster many years to make one. Most oysters never make a pearl.



To watch a video explaining how pearls are made click [here](https://tinyurl.com/48brynxx).

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Oyster and Pearl Craft Activity

You will need:

- a small Styrofoam or ping pong ball
- bottle cap
- a coffee filter or small paper plate
- paint: black, white, other
- paint brush
- scissors

1. Using white paint and other colors of your choosing, paint the item that will be your pearl. A bottle top can be used to hold your pearl in place as you paint.



This pearl was painted with white paint and a tiny bit of blue.

2. Fold the coffee filter or paper plate in half.



3. Use scissors to trim the edges of the folded coffee filter/paper plate.



Your oyster shell should look similar to this after opening.

4. If you are using a coffee filter for the oyster shell, you now have a finished pearl and oyster!



5. If you are using a paper plate for the oyster shell, you may choose to paint it.



Mixing black and white paint will make gray like an oyster's shell.

6. If you are using a coffee filter for the oyster shell, you now have a finished pearl and oyster!

