Will the Coral Babies Hold On?

Coral Reef | Film: Buoy Ahoy! Coral Reef | Game: Reef Thermometer

Our question

Does the surface of a tile change how many coral babies stay put in a storm?

You need: Three 'tiles': a smooth plastic lid, a piece of paper and a piece of rough fabric or sandpaper. Hole-punch paper dots or rice (coral babies), a drinking straw, a ruler

What to do

1. Put 20 coral babies on each tile.
2. Hold the straw 10 cm from the tile, level with the surface.
3. Give three strong puffs. This is the cyclone.
4. Count how many coral babies are still on the tile.
5. Repeat three times for each tile and work out the average.

Fair test: Keep these the same: the number of babies, the distance, the number of puffs and the person puffing.

Safety: One straw per child. Sweep up spilled rice or paper dots so nobody slips.

Our results

Tile surface	Trial 1	Trial 2	Trial 3	Average
Smooth lid				
Paper				
Rough fabric				

Think about it

- Which surface held on best? Why do you think that is?
- In March 2026, Cyclone Narelle hit Ningaloo. Afterwards lots of the real tiles were still there. What could make a tile good at holding on?
- What else, besides storms, can make it hard for young corals to survive?

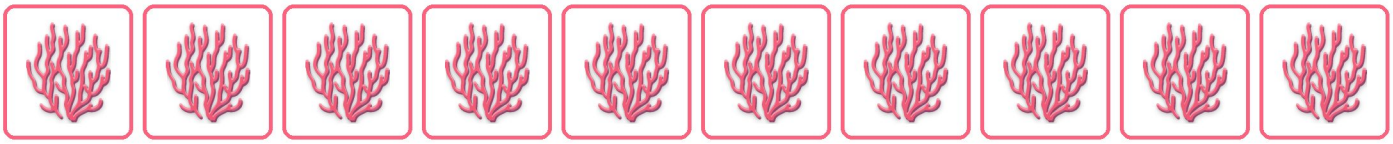
Curriculum link: Year 6: growth and survival affected by changing conditions. Year 6: extreme weather such as cyclones and extreme heat.

Reef in Hot Water

From the film

- Each coral is made of lots of tiny animals called polyps. Algae living inside them use sunlight to make food and share it.
- In 2025 the sea along WA's coast got far too hot for a long time. In one part of Ningaloo, about six out of every ten corals scientists checked had died.
- Coral spawning happens over a few nights in March or April, about a week or so after the full moon, after dark.
- The film says scientists raised hundreds of thousands of coral babies. The real number at Exmouth was about 800,000. Just over 3,000 settled on small tiles, including Polly, and the rest were released straight onto the reef.

Shade the bar: six out of every ten corals



Your turn

1. Write 'six out of every ten' as a fraction and as a percentage. Shade the coral bar to show it.

2. What does a coral get from its algae? What happens to the coral when the algae leave?

3. Use a moon calendar for next March. Which nights might Ningaloo's corals spawn?

4. About 800,000 coral babies were raised. Just over 3,000 settled on tiles, and the rest were released straight onto the reef. Why do you think scientists put some coral babies on tiles they can find again?

5. The film says the ocean needs to stop getting hotter for reefs to stay healthy. List two ways people are working on that.