

# Human Reproduction and Ageing

**Foetus:** a stage in the mammalian life cycle when a mammal in the uterus has begun to develop limbs and organs.  
**Gestation:** The length of time the young of a mammal develops inside the female's body until birth.  
**Process:** a series of changes that happen naturally.  
**Stage:** one part of a life cycle or period of development.

Glossary

## Reproduction

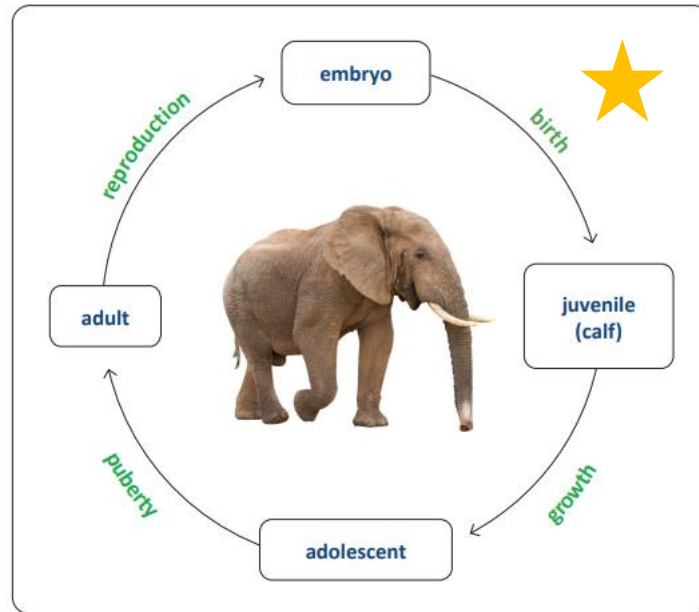
Reproduction is the process of producing offspring, which is vital for the survival of all plant and animal species. All living things go through a series of changes during their life cycle, where they grow, mature, reproduce and age. As living things age, they gradually decline and then die.

## Life Cycles

A life cycle is a series of changes that happen to a living thing during its lifespan. The events happen in a set order as the animal or plant grows and develops. A life cycle is presented on a circular diagram to show the main developmental stages of a plant or animal's life and the processes between these stages. All living things eventually die, but reproduction starts the life cycle again.

## Mammalian Life Cycle

There are four stages and four processes in the mammalian life cycle. The length of each stage varies for different animals. For example, the European hamster has a 2–3 week juvenile stage, but the same stage is 10 years for an African elephant.



**Mammals** are a group of vertebrate animals, which means they have a backbone. Mammals have several characteristics that make them different from other vertebrates. These include:

- producing milk to feed their young
- being warm-blooded
- giving birth to live young
- having fur or hair
- breathing air with lungs



## The Human Life Cycle

The human life cycle has the same stages and processes as other mammalian life cycles.

	<p><b>Embryo</b> The embryo stage takes around 40 weeks. This is called the gestation period.</p>
	<p><b>Juvenile</b> During the juvenile stage, the child grows and develops rapidly until around 12 years old.</p>
	<p><b>Adolescent</b> The adolescent stage ends at around 19 years old. The process of puberty enables an adolescent to develop into an adult and be able to reproduce.</p>
	<p><b>Adult</b> A person is a fully developed adult at around 20 years old and may choose to reproduce, which starts a new human life cycle.</p>



brown bear



Bengal tiger



human