

Reproduction

IGCSE Biology ■ Topic 16

IGCSE Biology



What we will cover

- 1 Asexual vs sexual
- 2 Flowers & pollination
- 3 Fertilisation in plants
- 4 Human reproduction
- 5 Pregnancy & hormones
- 6 STIs



Asexual vs sexual reproduction

asexual

one parent; identical **clones** ;
fast but **no** variation

sexual

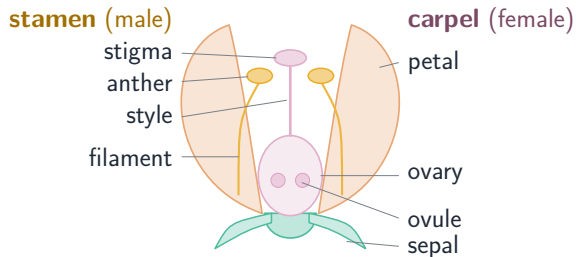
two parents; **gametes** fuse at
fertilisation ; gives **variation**



Flowers are reproductive structures



Parts of a flower



- **insect-pollinated** flowers have bright petals, scent and nectar, and sticky or spiky pollen, to attract insects and stick to them.
- **wind-pollinated** flowers have small dull petals, anthers and stigmas that hang outside, and light, smooth pollen that blows in the wind.

The parts, and which sex they belong to

Stamens

The male parts. Each of the **stamens** is a **filament** holding up an **anther**, where pollen is made.

Carpel

The female part: **stigma**, **style** and **ovary** holding the ovules.

Petals and sepals

Petals attract **pollinators**; sepals protect the bud before it opens.

Wind or insect

An insect-pollinated flower has large bright petals, nectar and sticky stigmas; a wind-pollinated one has small dull parts, anthers hanging outside and feathery stigmas.

Every difference between the two kinds of flower follows from one question: what is carrying the pollen?

The parts of a flower, and what each does

Part	What it does
sepals	protect the flower bud before it opens
petals	attract insects (bright) or are small and dull (wind)
anther	makes and releases the pollen
stigma	catches the pollen
ovary	holds the ovules , which become the seeds

Anther and stigma are the pair to keep straight: pollen leaves the **anther** and lands on the **stigma**. Everything else is packaging or protection.

The male reproductive system, part by part

Part	What it does
testes	make the sperm, and testosterone
scrotum	holds the testes outside the body, kept slightly cool
sperm ducts	carry sperm away from the testes
prostate gland	adds fluid to the sperm to make semen
urethra	carries semen – and, at other times, urine – out through the penis

The scrotum's job is temperature: sperm production needs a few degrees below body heat, which is why the testes hang outside.

The female reproductive system, part by part

Part	What it does
ovaries	make the egg cells, and oestrogen
oviducts	carry the egg towards the uterus – fertilisation happens here
uterus	where the baby develops
cervix	the neck of the uterus
vagina	receives the penis; also the birth canal

Fertilisation in the **oviduct**, development in the **uterus** – a very common one-mark question, and easy to swap by accident.

Pollination

Pollination : pollen moves from anther to stigma.

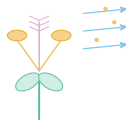
- **insect** – bright petals, scent, sticky pollen
- **wind** – small dull flowers, light pollen

(Supplement) Self-pollination is pollen reaching a stigma on the *same* plant;
cross-pollination is pollen reaching a *different* plant – more variation, and the reason most flowers work to avoid selfing.



insect-pollinated

bright petals, scent + nectar;
sticky, spiky pollen



wind-pollinated

small dull petals; anthers &
stigma hang out; light pollen

Fertilisation in plants

fertilisation

a **pollen tube** grows down the style; nuclei fuse in the **ovule**

germination

a seed needs water, oxygen & a suitable temperature



Human reproductive systems

male

testes make **sperm** ; sperm
ducts → **urethra** → penis

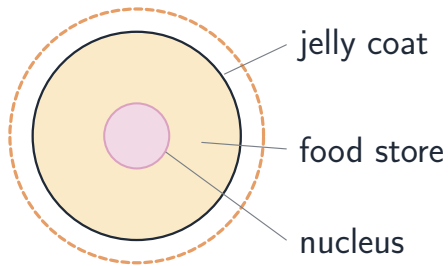
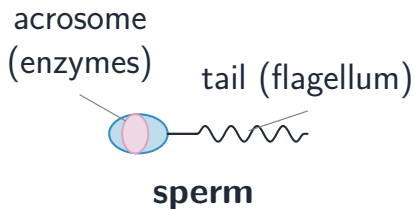
female

ovaries make **eggs** ;
oviduct → **uterus**

Gametes: sperm and egg

- **sperm** – small, many, swims (**flagellum**)
- **egg cell** – large, few (about one a month), stores food

Fertilisation = the two nuclei fusing. Sperm are made in **millions** and eggs in **ones**, which is the difference every comparison question turns on.



Two cells built for opposite jobs

The sperm

Small and mobile: a tail, many **mitochondria** for energy, and **enzymes** in the **acrosome** to break into the egg.

The egg

Large and still: a store of food, and a **jelly coat** that changes after fertilisation to keep other sperm out.

Haploid and diploid

Gamete nuclei are **haploid** – one set of **chromosomes** ; the zygote's nucleus is **diploid** , with two.

After fertilisation

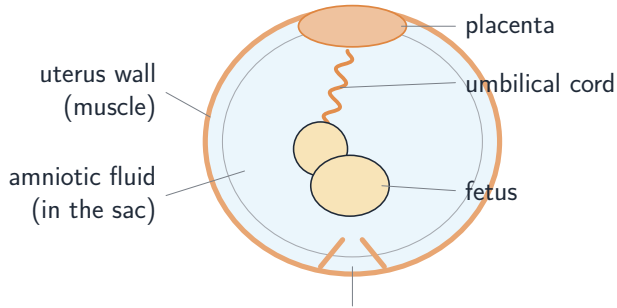
The zygote divides into an **embryo** , a ball of cells that **implants** into the lining of the uterus.

Each adaptation answers a job: the sperm must travel and enter, the egg must feed the embryo and admit only one sperm.

Pregnancy and the fetus

The **fetus** grows in the uterus:

- **placenta** – exchanges food, gases & waste
- **umbilical cord** – joins fetus to placenta
- **amniotic sac** – fluid cushions it



Puberty and the menstrual cycle

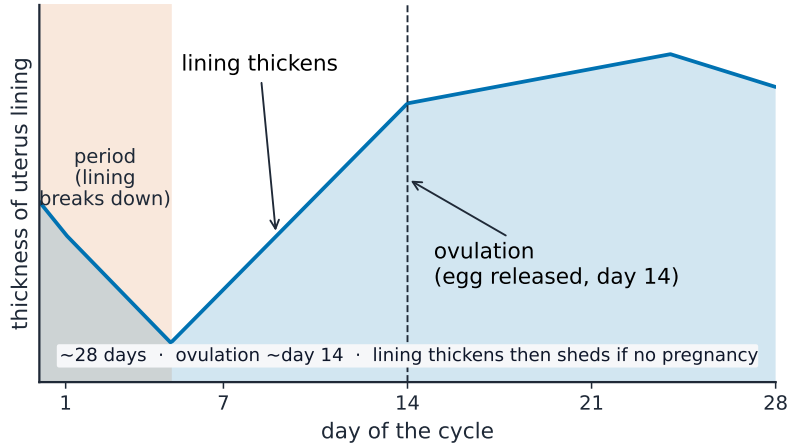
At **puberty** , sex hormones bring **secondary sexual characteristics** .

The ~28-day cycle: lining thickens → **ovulation** (day 14) → a period if no pregnancy.

A woman has a regular 28-day cycle and her period starts on the 1st. Around which date is she most likely to conceive?

- Day 1 is the day the period starts, not the day it ends.
- Ovulation is about day 14, so count 14 days on from the 1st.
- That points to about the 14th, and the days either side are the most fertile.

Puberty and the menstrual cycle, in detail



The lining thickens, an egg is released at day 14, and a period follows if there is no pregnancy

Sexually transmitted infections

HIV / AIDS

a **virus** spread in body fluids; can lead to AIDS

control

condoms, fewer partners, testing & treatment, no shared needles

Asexual reproduction

advantage: fast,
needs only one parent



identical clones - an even, reliable
crop when conditions are good

disease →

disadvantage:
no variation



a new **disease** can kill them all -
one weakness is shared by every one

Asexual reproduction is fast but gives no variation, so one disease can kill every identical offspring

Clones, and what a seed still needs

Genetically identical

The **offspring** have exactly the same **genes** as the parent – they are clones, so no variation arises.

Why that is useful

One parent, no pollinator, and a fast spread when conditions suit. It is the strategy of a plant that is already succeeding where it stands.

Why it is risky

No variation means one disease, or one change in conditions, can take the whole population.

Germination

A **seed** will only **germinate** when it has water, **oxygen** and a suitable **temperature** – light is not on that list.

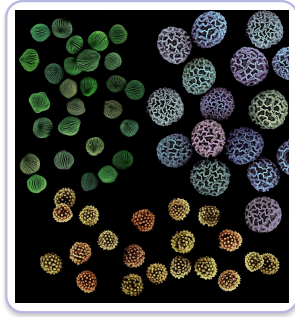
Cross-pollination buys **variation** , and pays for it by depending on **pollinators** or wind.

Pollination in action



A bee carries pollen from one flower to another – insect pollination in action

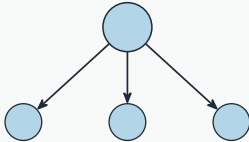
Pollination, continued



Pollen grains seen under an electron microscope (colour added); each plant has its own pattern

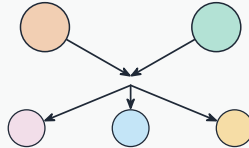
Two kinds of reproduction

asexual - one parent



offspring are **identical** clones

sexual - two parents



gametes join → **varied** offspring

Asexual reproduction needs one parent and gives identical clones; sexual reproduction needs two and gives varied offspring

Sexual reproduction, and what crosses the placenta

the advantage

variation means some offspring may survive if the environment changes

the cost

it needs two parents, and it is slower than asexual reproduction

the placenta

where dissolved **nutrients, gases and wastes** are exchanged between the mother's blood and the fetus's

the blood does not mix

the two circulations stay separate; only dissolved substances cross

amniotic fluid

surrounds the fetus, protecting it from shock and keeping the temperature steady

(Supplement)

some **pathogens** and **toxins** – alcohol, nicotine, rubella, HIV – can **cross the placenta and harm the fetus**

The placenta is a selective exchange surface, not a filter. Naming what it lets through *and* what harms the fetus is the marked pair.

Exam tips

- Asexual: one parent, identical offspring (no variation). Sexual: two parents, gametes fuse, offspring show variation.
- Fertilisation = fusion of two gamete nuclei $\rightarrow$ zygote. (Supplement: gametes haploid, zygote diploid.)
- Learn the flower parts and which are male (stamen) and female (carpel). Compare insect- and wind-pollinated flowers.

Exam tips (continued)

- Sperm: small, many, moving (flagellum). Egg: large, few, with a food store.
- Menstrual cycle: lining thickens → ovulation (day 14) → period if no fertilisation. (Supplement: FSH, LH, oestrogen, progesterone.)
- HIV is a virus that causes an STI and can lead to AIDS; it spreads through body fluids.



Worked example – wind or insect pollinated?

A flower has small dull green petals, no scent, and feathery stigmas hanging outside. How is it pollinated?

- No bright petals and no scent $\Rightarrow$ nothing is **attracting an insect**.
- Feathery stigmas **hanging outside** are built to **catch pollen from the air**.
- Anthers will also hang out, releasing large amounts of light, smooth pollen.
- So: **wind pollinated**.

Insect-pollinated: big bright scented petals, nectar, sticky pollen, **enclosed** anthers/stigmas. Wind: small, dull, **exposed**, huge amounts of light pollen.

Topic 16 – key takeaways

1

Two kinds

asexual: clones; sexual: variation

2

Flowers

stamen male, carpel female;
insect/wind

3

Gametes

sperm small & many; egg large &
few

4

Cycle

lining thickens, ovulation day 14,
period

Check yourself

- 1 Which reproduction gives variation?
- 2 Which flower part makes pollen?
- 3 How is a sperm cell adapted to move?
- 4 On about which day is an egg released?



Answers 1. sexual reproduction 2. the anther 3. it has a tail (flagellum) 4. about day 14