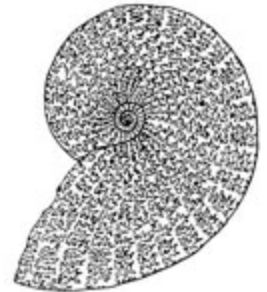
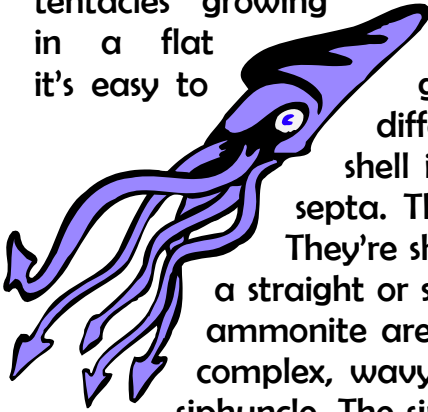


What's the difference between an ammonite and a nautiloid?

Both ammonites and nautiloids are cephalopods, marine invertebrates that have tentacles growing out of their heads. Advanced nautiloids have a shell coiled in a flat spiral that looks very much like the shell of an ammonite, so it's easy to get the two confused. However, there are some important differences. In both ammonites and nautiloids the interior of the shell is divided up into chambers by a series of bulkheads called septa. The septa of a nautiloid are pretty simple. They're shaped more or less like a contact lens, with a straight or slightly curved margin. But the septa of an ammonite are shaped more like a lasagna noodle, with complex, wavy margins. Another difference involves the siphuncle. The siphuncle is a tube that runs the length of a cephalopod's shell. In nautiloids, the siphuncle runs right through the center of each septum. But in an ammonite, the siphuncle runs around the outer edge of the shell, going through the edge of each septum..



Complex septa of an Ammonite shell

Ammonites became extinct at the same time that the dinosaurs did, but one genus of nautiloid survives to the present day.

