Coral Types

Learn how to identify coral growth forms
Branching Corals

Discrete, branching coral heads

(Pocillopora)

(Psammocora)
Staghorn Corals

- Distinct branches with sharp-pointing tips
- Pronounced corallites

(Acropora)
Massive Corals

- Surface smooth, ball, or boulder-shaped
- Crowded, small polyps
- Forms mounds and encrustations

(Porites)

(Goniastrea)
Encrusting Corals

Covers substrate (sea floor surface) in sheet formation adhering to hard surfaces

“Puke on a rock”
Plate/ Pillar Corals

- Extended pillar structures
- Upward growth, not widespread branching

Porites rus
Foliose Corals
(Pavona)

- Steep-sided ridges
- Polyps in valleys
- Aka “lettuce corals”
Soft Corals

- Have feathery tentacles
- Do not have hard skeleton – have a flexible skeleton
- Flowy appearance in water