

Oso Ammonoid

Ammonoids were a cephalopod subclass that essentially looked like squids with shells. While at a glance their fossils resemble nautiloids, they were actually more closely related to the squid and octopus.

The name 'Ammonoid' comes from an association ancient Greeks noticed between the spiral shape of many ammonoid fossils and the Egyptian god Ammon, who was often depicted with spiral shaped rams' horns. In other parts of the world the fossils were called snake stones.

Ammonoids were extremely diverse and plentiful from the Devonian (roughly 400 million years ago) until the Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction event (~66 million years ago). They varied greatly in size, from a few centimeters to two meters.

The hard shells of ammonoids were filled with air, so they essentially functioned like bladders, allowing an ammonoid to float at various points in the water column. They were probably not very fast swimmers, which may have contributed to the ascension of squid and octopi.

What ammonoids ate is also not clear. It is likely they were essentially filter feeders, eating krill, plankton, and copepods. The larger ones may have fed on small fish. It's also not clear how they oriented; were the bodies laid out mostly horizontally? Vertically? Upside down? Nobody is sure.

Ammonoid fossils are plentiful, but the fossils generally lack the actual outer surface and, most importantly, almost any soft tissue detail. It's not clear how many arms they had, any details about the organization or shape of the tissues, let alone what coloration they may have had. There is no evidence they had suckers on their arms, though reproductions will sometimes copy squid morphology as a guess. Some have even suggested the arms were more like feathery fronds, to capture and bring in plankton.

I have elected to go with ten arms as the current consensus 'best guess,' no suckers, and a small but noticeable siphon. Coloration and eyes are based on existing cephalopods.

Product consists of a morphable squid-like figure, and a posable/morphable shell. Shells didn't change shape, but being able to pose shells allows capturing different shell configurations.

There are 7 ammonoids included, plus 2 more fantastical creature variations. With some work and reference pictures, more varieties can be created. When loaded, the ammonoids are scaled based on a reasonable value for the ammonoid in question, but feel free to adjust as needed.

Ammonite: Ammonoid and ammonite are often used to refer to the entire group, but properly speaking ammonites were specific orders. Ammonites had evolute shells (the shell doesn't overlap as it spirals). They lived from the Jurassic through Cretaceous. Ammonites showed an enormous range of size across various species, from less than a centimeter to some of the largest at 2 meters.

Anahoplite: Anahoplites had narrow, convolute shells (the shell partially overlaps as it spirals), lived in the Cretaceous, and were small, from 4-19 cm.

Audouliceras: One of a number of heteromorph (not a regular spiral) ammonoids, particularly later in time. Audouliceras lived in the Late Cretaceous, and were roughly 15 cm in length.

Baculite: Classed as a heteromorph, Baculites feature a slightly curved shell and lived in the Late Cretaceous. Baculite species ranged from a few centimeters to two meters long.

Bostrychoceras: Another heteromorph from the Late Cretaceous, with a shape that starts as a spiral and then loosens up a bit. They were in the range of 25 centimeters high.

Emericiceras: From the Early Cretaceous, the loose open spirals of the Emericiceras were only a few centimeters in diameter.

Orthoceras: Orthoceras appeared in the Middle Ordovician, showing the simplicity of the earliest Ammonoids, and ranged from a few centimeters to two meters. While superficially similar to baculites, they had different lineages revealed by differences in their structure, as well as the long time gap between them.

Magma Ammonoid: A fanciful creature of molten rock. Changing the emission color can create other strange effects, like perhaps an eldritch creature of glowing blue energy.

Robot Ammonoid: Robot, living ship, and more, adds some sci-fi flavor to the ammonoid.

The shell materials give options for various combinations of effects. The fine detail adds bump and top coat details, while the other shell options create displaced shaping effects.

The Skin Dry and Skin Wet options give more control over the appearance of the flesh. For underwater effects, Skin Dry is actually more realistic; underwater creatures don't generally have glossy appearance. However, Skin Wet looks more dramatic, and also looks good for creatures that have been pulled out of the water.

In the end, it's your choice which to use; the flesh ammonoids are set to Wet look by default.