

## Shoal or school

*Main article: Shoaling and schooling*



These [goldband fusiliers](#) are [schooling](#) because their swimming is synchronised.

A random assemblage of fish merely using some localised resource such as food or nesting sites is known simply as an *aggregation*. When fish come together in an interactive, social grouping, then they may be forming either a *shoal* or a *school* depending on the degree of organisation. A *shoal* is a loosely organised group where each fish swims and forages independently but is attracted to other members of the group and adjusts its behaviour, such as swimming speed, so that it remains close to the other members of the group. *Schools* of fish are much more tightly organised, synchronising their swimming so that all fish move at the same speed and in the same direction. Shoaling and schooling behaviour is believed to provide a variety of advantages.<sup>[111]</sup>

Examples:

- Cichlids congregating at [lekking](#) sites form an *aggregation*.
- Many minnows and characins form *shoals*.
- Anchovies, herrings and silversides are classic examples of *schooling* fish.

While the words "school" and "shoal" have different meanings within biology, the distinctions are often ignored by non-specialists who treat the words as [synonyms](#). Thus speakers of [British English](#) commonly use "shoal" to describe any grouping of fish, and speakers of [American English](#) commonly use "school" just as loosely.<sup>[112]</sup>