

GROWING BABY CHICKS: WEEK 3

Preparing to Hatch

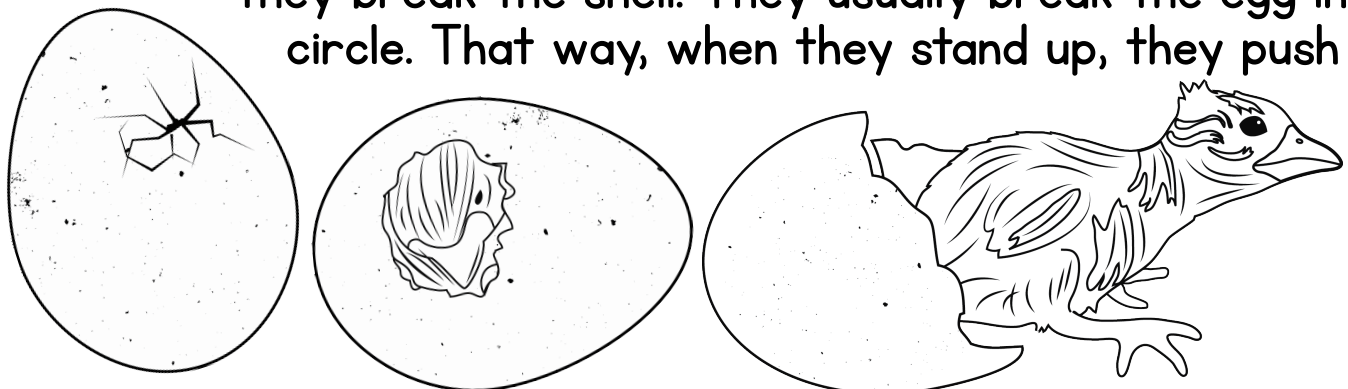
This week is an exciting week! The farmer knows his baby chicks will soon hatch. So, the farmer gets his **brooder pen** ready so that the tiny chicks will have a safe place to live. While the farmer works, the baby embryos are still growing and changing. What happens in the last few days before they hatch?

The last week of development during incubation is very important! The last few changes in their bodies will make them ready for life outside their egg. One important thing that happens is that the **intestines**, or organs that digest food, move inside the body. The claws continue to harden. By day 17, the chick is almost ready to hatch.

On day 18, the farmer stops turning the eggs. Now the chicks sit in one position, with their head toward the air cell. On day 20, the chick breaks a tiny lining that separates the air in the egg. That means they start breathing! Before then, the egg helped them breathe.

A few days before hatching, the chick absorbs any yolk that's left. This means the yolk is now part of its body. That way, the chick won't have to eat for the first few days of life. The yolk is its food.

Usually, after 21 days of incubation, chicks begin to hatch. They use their egg tooth to tap at the egg. Slowly, over hours, they break the shell. They usually break the egg in a circle. That way, when they stand up, they push a



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Preparing to Hatch (continued)

piece of egg off, like a lid. When they hatch, baby chicks are wet. They are also very tired! Hatching is hard work. Usually, baby chicks sit and rest for a while after hatching.

After drying off, baby chicks are fluffy and are usually yellow or light brown. Their egg teeth also fall off. Now, the baby chicks are ready to explore! However, new baby chicks need lots of protection. They also need a nice, warm place to stay. Otherwise, they can get sick and even die.

Once the baby chicks are dry, the farmer moves them to the **brooder**. This is a special pen. It is enclosed, which means it doesn't get too windy in there. These pens also usually have warming lights to keep the chicks from getting cold.

Finally, these pens help protect chicks from animals like cats or hawks that might eat them! Farmers give the chicks clean water to drink and special food.

After 21 days of growing in their eggs, baby chicks hatch ready to walk around and explore. It's amazing to think how quickly they change from a group of cells in an egg into a baby bird.

