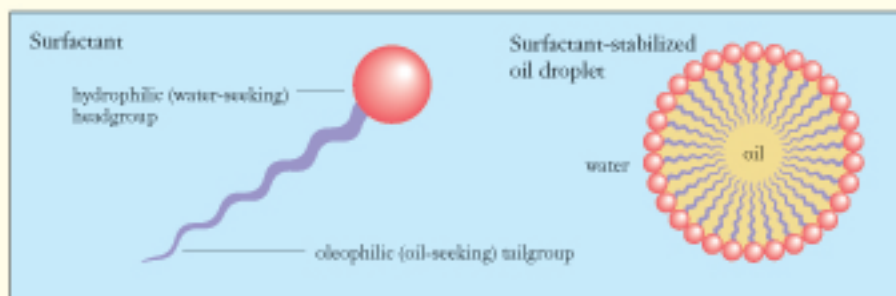


## DISPERSANTS—THE ACTIVE INGREDIENTS

Dispersants promote the formation of numerous tiny oil droplets, and retard the re-coalescence of droplets into slicks, because they contain surfactants (surface active agents) which reduce interfacial tension between oil and water. Surfactant molecules possess hydrophilic (water-

seeking) head groups that associate with water molecules, and oleophilic (oil-seeking) tails that associate with oil. Oil droplets are thus surrounded by surfactant molecules and stabilized. This helps promote rapid dilution by water movements.

*Surfactants consist of two parts; a water-seeking hydrophilic headgroup and an oil-seeking oleophilic tailgroup. This allows them to stabilize oil droplets.*



*Figure shows surfactant locating at oil/water interface (1), and oil dispersed into surfactant-stabilized droplets (2).*

