



Animal Cells and Plant Cells: The Key Differences

KS4 BIOLOGY

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What Are Cells?

Cells are tiny building blocks that make up all living things. Every animal and plant is made of millions of cells working together. Even though animal and plant cells have a lot in common, they have some important differences that make them suited to their jobs.

Both types of cells have a **nucleus** (the control centre), **cytoplasm** (a jelly-like substance), and a **cell membrane** (a protective border). But the differences start to show when you look more closely.

Plant Cells Have a Cell Wall

The biggest difference is that **plant cells have a cell wall** made of **cellulose**, while **animal cells do not**. This wall sits outside the cell membrane and gives plants their structure and strength.

Think of it like this: an animal cell is like a water balloon — it has a flexible outer skin (the membrane) that lets it change shape. A plant cell is like that same balloon inside a cardboard box (the cell wall) — it stays firm and rigid.

Plant Cells Have Chloroplasts and Large Vacuoles

Plant cells contain chloroplasts, which are tiny structures full of a green pigment called **chlorophyll**. These allow plants to make their own food using sunlight — a process called **photosynthesis**. Animal cells do not have chloroplasts because animals get their energy by eating food.

Plant cells also have **one large vacuole** that takes up most of the cell's space. This vacuole stores water, nutrients, and waste. Animal cells have tiny vacuoles or none at all. The plant cell's large vacuole helps keep it firm and rigid, supporting the plant.

Think of it like this: a plant cell's vacuole is like a water tank that keeps a plant standing tall. Without it, the plant would droop like a wilted flower. Animal cells don't

need big water tanks because animals have skeletons and muscles to hold themselves up.

Why These Differences Matter

These differences show how **cells are perfectly designed for their jobs**. Plant cells need rigid walls and vacuoles to stay upright and make food from sunlight. Animal cells need flexibility to move around and change shape. Understanding these differences helps us see how life is wonderfully adapted to different needs.