



How Scientists Sort and Classify Animals and Plants

KS2 SCIENCE

LIVING THINGS

Ages 9-12 ⌚ 3 min read

Why Do Scientists Need to Sort Living Things?

Imagine walking into a library where thousands of books are scattered everywhere with no order. Finding the book you want would take forever! That's why **scientists organize all living things** into groups. Our planet has millions of different animals and plants, and without a sorting system, it would be impossible to study them properly.

The system scientists use is called **biological classification** or **taxonomy**. It helps us understand which creatures are related to each other and how they're different.

Think of it like organizing your toys. You might put all your toy cars together, then sort those cars by colour, then by size. Classification works the same way—it sorts life into bigger groups, then smaller and smaller groups.

How Does the Classification System Work?

The main groups in classification go from **biggest to smallest**. At the top level, there are **kingdoms**—the largest groups. The two biggest kingdoms are **animals** and **plants**. Then things get more specific: kingdoms break into **phyla**, then **classes**, then **orders**, then **families**, then **genera**, and finally **species**—the smallest and most specific group.

Think of it like addresses. The kingdom is like your country, the phylum is like your county, the class is like your town, and the species is like your exact house number. Each level gets more detailed.

What Makes a Species Special?

A **species** is the most specific group, and it means a group of living things that can make babies together. For example, all dogs are one species because they can have puppies with each other. But dogs and wolves are different species—they cannot have healthy babies together.

Scientists give every species a special two-part name in **Latin**. For example, humans are **Homo sapiens**. This system was created by a scientist called **Carl Linnaeus** in the 1700s, and we still use it today!

Why Does Classification Matter?

Classification helps scientists in many ways. It makes it easier to study creatures, understand how they evolved, and protect endangered animals. When we know which animals are related, we can predict how they might behave or what they might need to survive.