

Nova's Guide to Classification Keys

Become a Nature Detective with Nova!

- **Classification is a way of sorting living things into groups based on their shared features, such as having feathers, fur, or scales.**
- **A branching key works like a map; you start at the top and follow the 'yes' or 'no' arrows until you reach the correct name of the organism.**
- **Vertebrates are animals that have a backbone, while invertebrates, like insects and snails, do not have a backbone.**
- **To build a key, you must choose clear characteristics that are easy to spot, such as 'Does it have legs?' or 'Does it live in water?'**
- **Classification keys are useful tools that help scientists identify new species they find in the wild.**

Did you know? Did you know? Scientists have discovered and named over 1.5 million different species on Earth! A classification key helps us sort them all out by asking simple 'yes' or 'no' questions about what they look like or where they live.

Key vocabulary: Classification · Branching key · Characteristic · Organism · Invertebrate · Vertebrate · Habitat