

Nova's Guide to Classification Keys

Be a Nature Detective: Use your eyes, spot the clues, and sort the world around you!

- A classification key is a tool that helps us identify living things by asking a series of 'yes' or 'no' questions about their physical features.
- The first step in creating a key is to choose a characteristic that clearly separates two groups, such as 'Does it have a backbone?'
- Vertebrates are animals that possess a backbone, while invertebrates, like insects and snails, do not have one.
- When building a branching key, each question must lead to a clear path that eventually identifies the specific organism.
- Observation is key: to be accurate, you must look closely at details like the number of legs, the texture of skin, or the type of habitat.

Did you know? Did you know? Scientists have identified and classified over 1.5 million different species on Earth! Using a classification key is like playing a game of 'Twenty Questions' with nature to help us organize this massive variety of life.

Key vocabulary: Classification · Branching Key · Characteristic · Vertebrate · Invertebrate · Identification · Observation