

Nova's Garden Classification Challenge

Learning objective: To understand how to use and create classification keys to identify living things.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below. Use full sentences for your answers.

Nova the barn owl loves observing the creatures in her garden. To keep track of what she finds, she uses a classification key. This is a special tool that helps scientists identify living things by asking a series of 'yes' or 'no' questions. Each question looks at physical characteristics, such as whether an animal has wings or if it lives in water.

For example, Nova might first ask, 'Does the creature have six legs?' If the answer is yes, she knows it is an insect. If the answer is no, she moves to the next question. By following the path of the key, Nova can distinguish between a beetle, a butterfly, or a garden spider. Classification keys are vital because they provide a logical way to sort and name organisms based on their features. Whether she is looking at a tiny ant or a tall sunflower, Nova knows that every living thing has a place in the natural world. Sorting them helps her understand how different species are related to one another.

Word bank: classification · organism · dichotomous · characteristics · identify · species

1. According to the text, what is the main purpose of a classification key? (2 marks)

2. What does Nova ask first to help her identify if a creature is an insect? (1 mark)

3. Why might a scientist need to use a classification key instead of just guessing the name of an animal? (2 marks)

4. Based on the passage, what might happen if someone accidentally skipped a question while using a classification key? (2 marks)

5. Do you think classification keys are important for studying nature? Explain your answer using evidence from the text. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a simple classification key that could help Nova identify three different garden creatures (e.g., a worm, a bee, and a snail).



Extension challenge: Choose three items in your classroom and create your own 'dichotomous' key. Start with a question that splits the items into two groups, then add a second question to identify each item individually.