

Nova's Nature Classification Key: The Woodland Explorer

Learning objective: To create a branching identification key to classify living things based on specific observable characteristics.

Nova the Owl needs your help to organise the wildlife found in our local woodland. Use this template to design a classification key. Start with a broad group of living things and use 'Yes' or 'No' questions to narrow them down until you reach the specific species. Remember to use clear, scientific observations like 'Does it have feathers?' or 'Is it a mammal?'.

Word bank: Classification · Vertebrate · Invertebrate · Characteristic · Branching · Species · Organism · Habitat · Identification · Dichotomous

1. The Starting Point: Identify the broad group of living things you are classifying and write your first 'Yes/No' question to split them into two distinct categories. (2 marks)

2. Branching Out: Choose one of your groups from the first question. Write a follow-up question that differentiates between two or more types of creatures within that group. (3 marks)

3. Explain why it is important for a classification key to have questions that only result in a 'Yes' or 'No' answer. What might happen if a question was ambiguous, such as 'Is the animal big?' (4 marks)

4. Compare and contrast: How would your classification key change if you were categorising plants instead of animals? Justify the changes you would need to make to your questions. (4 marks)

5. Scientific Justification: If you discovered a new, unknown creature in the woods, how would you use your key to identify its potential group? Describe the process step-by-step. (5 marks)

6. Evaluation: If you were to test your key with a partner, what specific 'test subject' would be the most difficult to classify? Explain your reasoning. (3 marks)

Extension challenge: Design a 'Greater Depth' extension: Imagine a species that shares characteristics from two different groups (for example, an organism that has features of both a plant and an animal). Draw this creature and write a short paragraph explaining why it would be difficult to place in your current classification key.