

living-things

Sorting plants and animals

Lesson at a glance

Open by holding up a daisy and a snail and asking which grows in the ground and which can slide away. Model the two clues aloud, then groups sort nature photo cards into plant and animal hoops, saying one reason each time. Consolidate on the IWB picture-sort interactive, then pupils draw one plant and one animal on the Investigation Journal page and point-and-tell a partner. Close with a short display-only share of one way to tell a plant from an animal.

Learning objectives

- Sort picture cards into plant or animal
- Say one way they can tell a plant from an animal

Before the bell – prep

Print one set of the nature photo cards per group the day before (daisy, dandelion, grass, apple tree; snail, robin, worm, woodlouse, ladybird). Lay two hoops per group with a plant cue and an animal cue ready. Have the Investigation Journal page to hand.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
nature photo cards (daisy, dandelion, grass, apple tree, snail, robin, worm, woodlouse, ladybird)	1	group	classroom	magazine or free printed garden photos stuck on card
sorting hoops	2	group	school kit	two large circles of yarn or two trays
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	classroom	plain paper folded into two labelled groups
crayons	1	pupil	classroom	coloured pencils

Safety watch-point

Keep floor hoop spaces clear so children do not trip when placing cards; supervise small photo cards so they stay out of mouths.

**Teaching moves**

- **Look for clues:** Hold the daisy card and think aloud: grows in the ground, stays still, so plant hoop. Then the snail: it can slide, so animal. Quick worm check — lives in soil but wriggles away, so animal. Keep saying the two clues only; ask one child to name one way we tell them apart.
- **Sort into the hoops:** Run two short bursts (~8 minutes): five cards first, then leftovers. Circulate asking 'Why did you put it there?' and 'Can it move by itself?' If a worm or woodlouse lands in the plant hoop, gently revoice the movement clue and let them move it.
- **Sort on the board:** Open the picture-sort interactive after the hoop work. Read 'Is it a plant or an animal?' each time; invite different children to place cards while others show thumbs up. Wrong placements stay friendly — ask what clue they used and try again together.
- **Show and draw:** Hand out the Investigation Journal page. Prompt: draw one plant and one animal from today's hoops. Walk the room; each child points and says one clue. If someone draws only animals, offer a plant card from the hoop to copy.
- **How do we know?:** Display-only talk. Pull one plant and one animal from the hoops and revoice pupil clues: plants grow in the ground and stay put; animals can move about. Celebrate careful noticing — no extra writing.

What it should show

Most Stage 1 pupils place daisy, dandelion, grass and apple tree in the plant hoop and snail, robin, ladybird in the animal hoop, naming grow-and-stay-put or can-move. Worm and woodlouse are the common mix-ups — children often treat 'lives in the ground' as a plant clue; affirm the home, then redirect to wriggle/crawl as the animal clue.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **'The worm lives in the ground, so it's a plant.'** — Hold the worm card and ask 'Can it wriggle away on its own?' Revoice: living in soil is not the same as growing rooted — movement makes it an animal.
- **'Trees are too big / not like a daisy, so maybe not a plant.'** — Point to the apple-tree card and the daisy together: both grow in the ground and stay put. Size does not change the group.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Offer only four clear cards (daisy, grass, snail, robin) and sit at the teacher table to place and say one clue together. • Adult-scribe a short label under their Investigation Journal drawings if needed.	• Sort the full card set and tell a partner the clue for each placement. • On the board sort, show thumbs up or down and name the clue they used.	• Help a friend name a clue for a tricky card (worm or woodlouse). • In the close, say both clues in their own words and give one example of each from today's hoops.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to Maths early sorting and classifying — two groups, one rule, say why each item belongs.