

living-things

Sorting plants and animals with a reason

Lesson at a glance

Open by holding up contrasting nature photo cards (a daisy and a robin) and asking what is the same and different. Model the plant-or-animal sort on the IWB picture-sort interactive so children hear the reason language, then groups sort the printed cards into two floor hoops—first plant or animal, then animals only into has legs or no legs—saying why each time. Children draw plants and animals on the Investigation Journal page and mark legs. Close with a display-only talk on the two reasons and that scientists sort living things too.

Learning objectives

- Sort living-thing cards into plants and animals and say the reason
- Do a second sort of animals into with legs and no legs
- Say the sorting reason for each sort in their own words

Before the bell – prep

Print one set of the ten nature photo cards per group the day before. Lay out two hoops per group with plant · animal labels; keep has legs · no legs labels ready to swap. Open the picture-sort interactive on the IWB before the bell.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
nature photo cards (daisy, oak tree, grass, bluebell, robin, frog, spider, ladybird, snail, worm)	1	group	classroom	cut pictures of the same plants and animals from old magazines or simple drawings on scrap card
sorting hoops	2	group	classroom	two labelled trays or two large circles of string on the floor
picture label cards (plant, animal, has legs, no legs)	1	group	classroom	sticky notes with a simple picture drawn for each group

Safety watch-point

Keep hoop sorting on the carpet or a clear floor space so children are not stepping on cards; remind groups to walk, not run, when collecting cards at tidy-up.

**Teaching moves**

- **Getting Started:** Hold up two contrasting printed cards (daisy and robin) so the whole class can see. Ask only what is the same and what is different. Keep it light—do not name plant or animal yet, and treat every guess as welcome.
- **Today's Words:** Read the three short board lines—sort, plant, animal—and stress we always say why. Point to a real card as you say each word: plant grows from the ground; animal can move. Keep plant and animal as today's sort labels, not words to memorise.
- **Look Carefully:** Spread one card set face up on the carpet. Name all ten together—daisy, oak tree, grass, bluebell, robin, frog, spider, ladybird, snail, worm—before any sorting. Ask only noticing questions: leaves or flowers? legs, shell or feelers?
- **Board Sort: Plant or Animal:** Open the picture-sort interactive in explore mode. Read *Is it a plant or an animal?* Invite children to call out; you drag. Move steadily through all ten. A wrong hoop is a conversation—ask why does it go there? Watch for oak tree as plant and snail as animal.
- **Sort with the Hoops:** Groups of four to six, one card set and two hoops. Run plant or animal only until every group finishes; aim for every child to say a reason once (revoice for quieter children). Clear plant cards aside, swap labels to has legs · no legs, and sort the animals only. Watch snail, worm, spider and robin.
- **Draw Our Sort:** Hand out the Investigation Journal page and pace three spoken beats: draw some plants and animals; mark which animals have legs or no legs; tell a partner why one group goes together. Circulate asking why did you put that one there? Scribe a short reason if a child wants a label but cannot write yet.
- **Why Did We Sort That Way?:** Whole-class display-only talk. Ask one recall question at a time: What reason first? (plant or animal) What reason for the animals second? (legs or no legs). Then lead the class to echo once: Scientists sort living things into groups to learn about them, just like we did.
- **Tidy Up:** Children collect cards into sets and stack hoops. Quick oral check while they tidy: Show me a plant card. Show me an animal with no legs.

What it should show

Most Stage 1 pupils place daisy, oak tree, grass and bluebell as plants, and robin, frog, spider, ladybird, snail and worm as animals. Second sort: robin, frog, spider, ladybird with legs; snail and worm with no legs. Common mix-ups—snail not an animal, oak tree skipped as a plant, robin left out of has legs because of wings—are setup-talk moments, not wrong findings. Affirm movement or growing-from-the-ground language.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **A snail is not an animal because it is slow or has a shell.** — Hold up the snail card beside the robin. Ask does it move on its own? Does it grow from the ground? Place it in the animal hoop and say together: it moves, so it is an animal.
- **A tree is not a plant—plants are only small flowers or grass.** — Point to the oak tree card and ask does it grow from the ground? Has it got leaves? Affirm: trees are plants too, then place it in the plant hoop.
- **A robin has no legs because it has wings, or a spider is not an animal.** — On the legs sort, look together at the robin's two legs under the body and the spider's eight legs. Both move on their own, so both are animals with legs.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Child points to the hoop and the adult voices the reason; one clear sort plus a spoken reason is enough if drawing is slow. • Sit at the teacher table with a smaller handful of cards (for example three plants and three animals) before joining the full set.	• Prompt a second spoken reason on the same card: Can you say it another way? • After both hoop sorts, ask the child to tell a partner one plant and one animal with no legs from their drawing.	• Invite a third sorting idea aloud (What else could we sort by?) without a new hoop set. • Child scribes or dictates a short reason label beside one drawn group on the Investigation Journal page.

Cross-curricular hook

Links to Maths early sorting and classifying—groups made for a reason the child can say in their own words.