

living-things

Our school habitat and its food chain

Lesson at a glance

Open with a photo or window view of a quiet school corner and ask who might live there unseen. Teach habitat, then take the class to one microhabitat (log, leaf pile or hedge) for a short, guided look. Back inside, build a shared plants/animals list, then order dead leaves → woodlouse → blackbird on the flow-builder interactive. Pupils draw one food chain in the Investigation Journal and close with a partner talk on how those living things depend on each other.

Learning objectives

- List living things found in one school-ground microhabitat
- Build a simple food chain with arrows showing who eats what
- Explain that living things in a place depend on each other

Before the bell – prep

Before the day, pick one safe microhabitat with clear boundaries and check for glass or litter. Print the Investigation Journal page; gather magnifiers, trays and gloves. Have laminated microhabitat photo cards and a tray of leaf litter ready as indoor fallback.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
hand magnifiers	1	pair	school kit	share one magnifier between a small group, or use careful naked-eye looking
shallow collection trays	1	group	classroom	clean plastic lunch boxes or lid trays
gloves	1	pupil	supermarket	pupils handle leaf litter with a stick and wash hands thoroughly afterwards
food-chain cards (dead leaves, woodlouse, blackbird)	1	class	classroom	write the three names on sticky notes or mini whiteboards
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	classroom	plain paper with the same drawing task written on the board
laminated microhabitat photo cards	1	class	classroom	show microhabitat photos on the IWB only
tray of leaf litter (indoor fallback)	1	class	outdoors/ nature	use photo cards or IWB photos only

Safety watch-point

Move gently; do not harm living things. Return every find where it was. Check ground for glass/litter; wash hands after soil and leaf litter work.

Teaching moves

- **What is a habitat?:** Teach only the word habitat here, linked to the photo or real corner. Invite two or three ideas about food, water, shelter or hiding places. Hold food chain and depend for later steps.
- **Explore a microhabitat:** Keep the whole class at one spot. You lift the log or leaf layer first. Invite three or four pairs for a one-minute look while the rest call out what they notice; swap once if time allows. Return every living thing where it was found.
- **What did we find?:** Scribe a two-column board list: Plants and Animals/minibeasts. Accept common names and tally repeats. Prompt which make food, which eat dead leaves, and which might hunt — keep the list up for the chain build.
- **Build a food chain:** Open the flow-builder interactive in explore mode, layout chain, with dead leaves, woodlouse and blackbird. Pupils call the order; a volunteer drags. Target: dead leaves → woodlouse → blackbird with arrows meaning is eaten by. Retell aloud and ask which way the arrows point.
- **Draw our food chain:** Pupils draw one simple chain on the Investigation Journal page now. Check arrow direction first and at least two labelled living things from the explore. Default to the modelled chain; only offer alternatives the class actually named.
- **Living things depend on each other:** Partner talk 45–60 seconds each, anchored to the school-ground chain: What if the dead leaves went? What if fewer woodlice? Hands up to share one idea. Display-only — nothing typed.

What it should show

Expect a three-link chain dead leaves → woodlouse → blackbird (or a class-named alternative such as leaf litter → worm → blackbird) with arrows pointing to the eater. Pupils should name at least two real finds as plant or animal. Reversed arrows are the main setup error — retell plant material first, then eater, then hunter.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Pupils draw the arrow from eater to food (blackbird → woodlouse) because they think the arrow means ‘goes hunting for’.** — Hold the cards and say the arrow means is eaten by or gives energy to. Trace dead leaves to woodlouse to blackbird while they watch the arrow point to each eater.
- **Pupils think dead leaves cannot start a food chain because they are not a living plant.** — Use the note on the cards: dead leaves were once part of a living plant, and that plant material is still the food at the start of this chain.
- **Pupils treat the food chain as only about big countryside animals, not the school corner they just visited.** — Point back to matching names on the class list (woodlouse, leaves, bird) so every link is clearly from their microhabitat.

**Differentiation**

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Less confident pairs call out one plant and one animal for you to scribe on the class list. • Offer the modelled dead leaves → woodlouse → blackbird chain with cards already in loose order to check arrow direction only.	• Confident pairs aim to notice three different living things outdoors and place a tally when the class list repeats a find. • After the journal chain, ask once: what would happen if this link disappeared?	• If the class list supports it, rebuild one alternative chain (e.g. grass → snail → thrush) using the same arrow rule. • Fast finishers add one extra link they wonder about as a spoken idea to a partner — not a second drawing task.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to Geography local habitats — the same who-eats-what idea appears in Irish hedgerow, bog and seashore places.

