

living-things

Sorting plants and animals

Lesson at a glance

Open with a daisy and a snail side by side and ask which grows in the ground and which can slide away. Model the two spoken clues, then groups sort nature photo cards into plant and animal hoops on the floor. Recap on the picture-sort interactive on the IWB. Pupils draw one plant and one animal on the Investigation Journal page and close by sharing one way they can tell the two groups apart.

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 nature photo cards per group the day before (daisy, dandelion, grass, apple tree; snail, robin, worm, woodlouse, ladybird). Lay two floor or table hoops per group with a plant cue and an animal cue beside them. Have the picture-sort interactive ready on the IWB.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
nature photo cards (daisy, dandelion, grass, apple tree, snail, robin, worm, woodlouse, ladybird)	1	group	provided printable	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	provided printable	plain paper folded into two labelled groups
crayons	1	pupil	classroom	coloured pencils

Safety watch-point

Keep floor hoops in clear walkways so children do not trip while carrying cards; remind them to walk, not run, between packs and hoops.

**Teaching moves**

- **Look for clues:** Hold the daisy card and think aloud: grows in the ground, stays put, so plant. Hold the snail, then the worm: both can move on their own, so animals. Keep saying only the two clues aloud — does it grow and stay put, or can it move by itself? Ask once: what is one way we can tell a plant from an animal?
- **Sort into the hoops:** Run two short bursts of about eight minutes: groups sort five cards, then finish leftovers and share one placement. Circulate asking why did you put it there? If a worm or woodlouse lands in the plant hoop, ask can it wriggle or crawl away on its own? and revoice the movement clue.
- **Sort on the board:** Open the picture-sort interactive in explore mode. Read is it a plant or an animal? for each card. Invite different children to place; class show thumbs up if they agree. Wrong placements stay friendly — ask what clue are you using? and try again together.
- **Show and draw:** Hand out the Investigation Journal page. Prompt draw one plant and one animal you sorted. Walk the room and ask each child to point and say one clue. If a child draws only animals, offer a plant card from the hoop to copy. Keep it calm and short.
- **How do we know?:** Hold up one plant and one animal from today's hoops. Draw out one clue in a child's own words, then revoice: plants grow in the ground and stay put; animals can move about. End by celebrating that we sorted like careful noticers.

What it should show

Most Junior Infants will place daisy, dandelion, grass and apple tree in the plant hoop and snail, robin, worm, woodlouse and ladybird in the animal hoop, naming one clue (grows in the ground / can move). A common surprise is the worm or woodlouse in the plant hoop because it lives in soil — affirm the ground link, then redirect to can it wriggle away on its own?

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Some children put the worm (or woodlouse) with the plants because it lives in the ground.** — Gently ask: can it wriggle or crawl away on its own? Revoice movement as the animal clue and place it in the animal hoop together.
- **A child may think anything green or still is a plant, or struggle to say why a card belongs.** — Point back to the two cue pictures by the hoops and model one short sentence: it stays put, so plant, or it can move, so animal.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Offer only four clear cards (daisy, grass, snail, robin) and sit at the teacher table to place each one with a spoken clue. • If a child draws only one group, hand them a plant or animal card from the hoop to copy.	• Sort the full card set and tell a partner one clue for each placement. • On the Journal page, point to both drawings and say which is plant and which is animal.	• Sort the full set and help a friend name a clue for a tricky card such as the worm. • In the close, offer a clue in their own words for both a plant and an animal from today's hoops.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to early Maths sorting — two groups, same-and-different — using the plant and animal hoops as a living set.