

living-things

Sorting Irish animals by their features

Lesson at a glance

Open with only the robin and salmon cards and ask what is the same and different. Name feature, sort and sorting rule, then give each group the six Irish animal cards (robin, frog, hedgehog, snail, salmon, bee) to look at closely. Groups sort once by legs, wings or covering, share two different rules, then run the same six through the sorting-tree interactive on the IWB. A second sort by land/water or how it moves lands on the Investigation Journal page with both rules and why the second was useful.

Learning objectives

- Group Irish animals by visible features such as legs, wings, feathers, scales, spines or shell
- Re-sort the same animals by a second sorting rule such as habitat or movement
- Explain why a chosen sorting rule is useful

Before the bell – prep

Print one set of six wildlife photo cards per group the day before. Lay out up to six sorting spaces per group (A3 sheets, trays or hoops) and sticky notes or scrap paper. Have the sorting-tree interactive ready in explore mode on the IWB with the same six animals.

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
Irish wildlife photo cards (robin, frog, hedgehog, snail, salmon, bee)	1	group	provided printable	simple line drawings of the same six animals on scrap card with the name written underneath
labelled sorting spaces (A3 paper sheets, trays or hoops)	6	group	classroom	six sheets of scrap A3 or A4 paper, or chalk circles on desks
scrap paper or sticky notes for first-sort reminder	1	group	classroom	corner of the group's scrap paper or the reverse of a used sheet
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	plain paper with two simple grouping spaces drawn by the pupil



Safety watch-point

No significant hazard. Supervise card handling so sets stay complete and floor spaces stay clear of hoops and trays during group movement.

Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Show only the robin and salmon cards; keep the other four face down. Take three or four quick same/different answers in the children's own words — do not name sorting rules yet.
- **What helps us group animals?:** Project the short board text only. Model one cycle aloud on robin and salmon: wonder, predict wings, check the cards, notice feathers vs scales, decide 'has wings' is a useful first rule. Say 'criterion' once, then stick to 'sorting rule'.
- **Look closely at the cards:** Give one quiet minute with the six cards, then circulate: 'Point to the covering. How many legs? Wings or fins?' Steer talk to what is visible, not diet or feelings.
- **Sort by a feature:** Offer the three board rules and let each group pick one. Visit with 'What is your rule? Show me one animal that nearly tricked you.' After about nine minutes freeze the room; two groups with different rules hold up a group and watchers test whether the salmon would stay under their rule. Check every desk has a sticky note of rule plus groups before you leave the step.
- **Branching sort on the board:** Open the sorting-tree interactive in explore mode. Take one animal at a time; pupils answer 'Does it have legs?' then 'Does it have wings?' while you drag. Do not reveal a finished tree first. After it is complete ask which question split best and link back to groups that used covering instead.
- **A second sort and our journal:** Gather cards; leave the first sticky note on the desk. Second sort is land/water or how it moves — about six minutes. Then send them to the Investigation Journal: copy sort one from the sticky note, record sort two, and one short line on why the second rule was useful. Early finishers whisper one animal that changed groups and why.
- **Why grouping matters:** Start concrete — which animal moved groups, which rule was easiest to apply fairly — then one short step to Irish wildlife work: clear rules help people count garden birds, check ponds and look after hedgerows and rivers. Tidy cards into sets.

What it should show

Branching tree: no legs = snail, salmon; legs but no wings = frog, hedgehog; legs and wings = robin, bee. Land/water: land = robin, hedgehog, snail, bee; water = frog, salmon (frog with water because they breed there; accept a reasoned land placement from the card). Movement: flies = robin, bee; hops = frog; walks = hedgehog; swims = salmon; crawls = snail. Odd placements usually mix fins with wings or legs — re-check the card together.



Misconceptions & interventions

- **Pupils call the salmon's fins 'legs' or 'wings', or say a fish has 'no covering'.** — Point at the card: covering is the outer surface — scales on the salmon, feathers on the robin. Fins are neither legs nor wings; put fins with 'no legs / no wings' talk.
- **Pupils think one sorting rule is the 'right' answer and freeze when a second rule moves an animal.** — Hold up the same six cards and revoice: same animals, new rule, new groups — that is the point. Ask which animal moved and why the new rule still works.
- **Groups argue the frog must be land-only or invent a third habitat bucket.** — Keep the binary Irish sort: put the frog with pond/river animals because they need water to breed. If they place it on land and justify smooth skin or hops from the card, accept the reasoned placement — do not open a third space.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Offer only the legs / no legs rule and two sorting spaces; pair at the teacher table to name covering on each card before placing it. • Let them copy the first-sort sticky note into the journal with a partner while you scribe the rule line if needed.	• After the first sort, ask them to find one feature every card has and one feature only some have. • On the second sort, prompt 'why is this rule useful?' before they write the journal line.	• Allow a further split inside a group (e.g. legs-and-wings vs legs-no-wings) only if they can name the new rule aloud. • Early finishers name one animal that changed groups between sorts and explain why, then critique whether a different first question on the tree would split as cleanly.

Cross-curricular hook

Tie to Maths sets and sorting — same six items, different attributes, different groups — and to Irish hedgerow, garden and river habitats in SESE.