

living-things

What do living things do?

Lesson at a glance

Open with a snail (or woodlouse) beside a toy car and ask what the living one can do that the toy never can. Pupils whisper predictions, then work two stations in an inner/outer ring: a potted plant beside a paper leaf or stone, and a minibeast tub beside a toy. Sort six action cards into Living things can... versus Needs a person..., then draw or write one clear living-versus-object difference on the Investigation Journal page.

Learning objectives

- Identify what living things can do, such as grow, need food or water, and move or change
- Compare a living thing with a non-living object and record one clear difference

Before the bell – prep

Day before: gather one small potted plant, paper leaf/fabric/pencil/stone, a clear-lidded snail or woodlouse tub, and a toy car or brick. Set two stations so halves can swap. Print or board-write the six action cards. Return the creature outdoors after class.

**Materials**

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
snail or woodlouse in a clear tub with air holes and a little damp leaf litter	1	class	outdoors	a second small potted plant if no minibeast is available
small potted plant	1	class	classroom	any safe leafy plant the school already keeps; a fresh cut leaf standing in water only as a last resort (then stress need for water and staying green, not growth or movement)
non-living comparison objects (toy car or plastic brick, pencil or stone, paper leaf or fabric scrap)	1	class	classroom	any safe classroom objects that cannot grow or move alone
action word cards for the sort (grow, need water or food, move by itself, change, stay the same size, only moves when pushed)	1	class	provided printable	write the six actions on the board as two lists
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	plain paper with two boxes labelled living and object

Safety watch-point

Lids stay on the minibeast tub; children do not handle the creature. Return it outdoors after. No eating plant material. Wash hands when stations finish.



Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Show only the snail tub and one non-living object; keep the full station kit covered. Take two or three quick ideas on which is alive — do not list grow, need water or move yet.
- **What do we think living things do?:** Keep talk on the snail and toy. Revoice whispers into simple actions: grow, need food or water, move by themselves, change. Head off “the toy is living because it moves” by noting a toy only moves when pushed.
- **Watch and compare at stations:** Model one full look first, then run the two-ring pattern: inner 4–6 at the table, outer watchers, swap after about 2 minutes, then swap class halves across stations. Lids stay on unless you open briefly; children do not handle the creature. If someone says “it’s doing nothing,” point to damp soil beside dry paper, or feelers and a shell beside a still toy.
- **Sort the actions:** Make two floor or board piles: Living things can... and Needs a person.... Read each action card aloud and let the class call the pile. Living: Grow, Need water or food, Move by itself, Change as it lives. Needs a person: Stay the same size, Only moves when pushed. Correct gently and revoice.
- **Record your comparison:** Pupils draw or write on the Investigation Journal page only. Offer the stem: The living thing can... The object never.... Watch that the difference is a real action (grows, needs water, moves, changes), not only colour or size.
- **What did we notice?:** Invite three or four pairs to share, then gather grow, need food or water, and move or change under Living things can... on the board. If movement=equals-living returns, push the toy once and contrast with the snail moving on its own.

What it should show

Pupils typically notice damp soil, green leaves or a leaning stem at the plant station, and feelers, legs, shell or slow movement at the minibeast station — versus a dry, still object. A four-minute look will not show growth or feeding; affirm clues already there. On the Journal, expect one clear action difference (grows / needs water / moves by itself), not only looks different.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **“The toy is living because it can move / has eyes.”** — Push the toy car once, then watch the snail or woodlouse. Revoice: a toy only moves when a person pushes it; a living thing can move or change on its own.
- **“It’s doing nothing, so it isn’t living.”** — Point to what is already there — damp soil beside dry paper, green stem, feelers or shell beside a still toy. Say: that is still a living clue we can compare.
- **“The plant must eat food like the snail.”** — Keep pupil language simple: living things need food or water. Quietly match the specimen — animals take in food; plants take in water (and light) to stay green.



Lesson 3

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Pair at the teacher table and use the stem The living thing can... The object never... while pointing at the specimen and the object. • Accept a drawing of snail/plant beside toy/paper leaf with one dictated difference.	• Prompt a second difference after the first action is recorded (e.g. needs water and can move). • Ask: Did it need anything? Did it change?	• Add a careful detail drawing (feelers, new leaves) and name which living action it shows. • Fair-test style critique of a classmate's sort: which action card is hardest to place and why?

Cross-curricular hook

Link to oral language: partner whispers and the stems I think living things... / The object never... before writing.

