

The systems of the human body

Lesson at a glance

Open by asking what jobs the body is still doing while pupils sit still, then introduce organ and body system as job-based teams. Groups sort ten organ cards onto five team mats (Breathing, Circulation, Digestion, Movement, Control) by job, not body position. The class checks disputed placements on the sorting-tree interactive, then locks three full teams plus two named teams into the Investigation Journal. Close with a volunteer hand-off chain that follows oxygen to running legs so pupils can name how systems depend on each other.

Learning objectives

- Group major organs by the body system they belong to and the job that system does
- Explain how at least two body systems depend on each other to keep a person healthy

Before the bell: prep

Print and cut one Cut-out cards sheet per group the day before: ten organ cards (name and picture only) plus five team labels with jobs, cut apart. Each group sticks a label at the top of each of five pieces of card to make its team mats, with a glue stick (or Blu Tack to use the cards again). Keep the Support cards section aside for stalled groups only. No body silhouette. Queue the sorting-tree interactive on the IWB. Have a soft ball or beanbag ready for step 6 (a scrunched-up sheet of paper works too).

Materials

Item	Qty	Per	Source	Low-cost substitute
organ cut-out cards (lungs, windpipe, heart, blood vessels, stomach, intestines, bones, muscles, brain, nerves)	1	group	provided printable	write the ten organ names and job lines on sticky notes or scrap card
five team mats: cut the five team labels off the Cut-out cards sheet and stick each one at the top of its own piece of card or sheet of paper	1	group	provided printable	five sheets of paper, each with a team name and its job written at the top
a glue stick, or Blu Tack if the cards are to be used again	1	group	classroom	sticky tape
Investigation Journal page	1	pupil	provided printable	blank A4 page ruled into five labelled team boxes
pencils or colouring pencils	1	pupil	classroom	any classroom writing or drawing tools
blank scrap card or sticky notes for challenge organs	3	group	classroom	spare paper torn into slips
a soft ball or beanbag (a scrunched-up sheet of paper works too)	1	class	classroom	a scrunched-up sheet of paper

Safety watch-point

Adult cuts the organ cards in advance, or supervise scissor use if pupils finish cutting. No other hazard.

Teaching moves

- **Getting Started:** Keep it short and curious. Collect three or four jobs (breathing, heart beating, digesting lunch, thinking, moving), affirm each, and do not name the five systems or hand out cards yet. Frame the key question: if the body has so many jobs, how does it organise them?
- **Body systems are teams:** Read the two board definitions with the class. Hold up only the heart card and model the sorting rule aloud: we sort by job (pumps blood), not because it sits beside the lungs. Put the heart back with the set; do not name the five teams or place any card yet.
- **Sort the organ teams:** Name the five teams as groups make their mats. Model one placement: heart pumps blood, so Circulation. Circulate and challenge chest-position sorts with 'What job does this organ actually do?' Guide them back to the job line on the mat.
- **Check our sorts on the board:** You drive the sorting-tree interactive; pupils call placements with a job sentence. Tackle the heart first. After each drop, ask a different pair whether they agree and why. Groups may move one card and say what changed their mind, then stick their cards down.
- **Draw the system teams:** Frame the Journal page as locking in the agreed sort: three fully labelled teams (name, job, organs) plus the other two named with at least one organ. Ban full body outlines. Groups keep their finished mats in front of them while they write.
- **Pass the job along:** Stand five volunteers in a row at the front, one per team, in the order on the board, and give Control a soft ball: it is the job being passed along. Read the lines with the class first, then run the running-legs chain once: Control, Breathing, Circulation, Digestion (it did its work before the run), Movement. Each volunteer says their line and passes the ball on. Then break the chain: Breathing sits down, the chain runs again, and the class says why Movement stops (no oxygen is coming in, so the blood has none to carry). Cold-call pairs for at least two dependence statements before you pack away.

What it should show

Sort key: Breathing: lungs, windpipe; Circulation: heart, blood vessels; Digestion: stomach, intestines; Movement: bones, muscles; Control: brain, nerves. Success on dependence: a pupil names two systems and how one needs the other (e.g. muscles need oxygen from Breathing and blood from Circulation). Odd sorts are almost always position-based (heart with Breathing); re-ask the job.

Misconceptions & interventions

- **Pupils put the heart with Breathing because both sit in the chest.** Hold the heart card and ask 'What job does the heart actually do?' Restate pumps blood, then place it on Circulation. Revoice: we sort by job, not by neighbours in the body.
- **Pupils think Digestion should always come first in the running chain, or that systems work one after another in a fixed queue.** Agree that Digestion did its work before the run, then ask what it handed into the blood. Draw out that systems hand work to each other all the time, not only in one fixed order.
- **Pupils justify a placement with a body map ('it's near the lungs') instead of a job sentence.** On the sorting-tree interactive, refuse the placement until they give the job line from the mat. Praise 'pumps blood, so Circulation' as the proof the class needs.

Differentiation

Emerging	Developing	Proficient
• Start the group with four cards only (lungs, heart, stomach, brain) and offer the Support cards that already print each organ's job. • Accept two fully labelled teams plus the rest named with one organ on the Journal page.	• After the agreed sort, add one arrow between two teams on the Journal page and write how one hands work to the other. • Cold-call them first for a dependence sentence after the running chain.	• Write one extra organ on a blank slip, place it on a mat, and justify by job (accept liver → Digestion at this level; park skin for later). • Critique a position-based sort aloud and restate the job-not-place rule for the class.

Cross-curricular hook

Link to SPHE healthy-body talk: name which system a doctor listens to with a stethoscope and why.