

# The Key to Living Things

Name \_\_\_\_\_

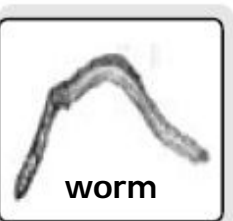
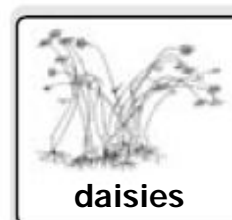
You may have never thought about it, but all living things are put into different groups. Living things are placed into different groups because it makes them easier to organize and easier to study. There are over 1.4 million kinds of known living things. With this many living things you can see why it is important to develop a system to classify them.

There are many different features scientists use to classify organisms. Living things may be classified based on their outward appearance, structures inside their body, ancestral relationships, genetic characteristics, and behavior.

Many times scientists develop keys to help other people identify a living thing. A type of key called a dichotomous key allows the person using it to make decisions on features a living thing has. Generally speaking, the choices in the key start broadly and get more specific. Eventually, the decision is narrowed down to the name of a living thing or group to which a living thing belongs.

**Directions:** In this activity you will learn how to use a dichotomous key. Start by looking at one of the pictures of living things at the bottom of this page. To classify this living thing, you will work your way down the dichotomous key on the next page. Do this by reading the first question on the key and answering it. Follow the line that connects the question to your answer. Then read the next question and follow the line connected to your next answer. Do this until you reach the end of the lines, where you will write the name of that living thing in the empty box. After you have completed keying out all the living things below, make your own drawings and give them to other students to key out.

**Classify these living things using the dichotomous key on the following page.**



# Dichotomous Key

Name \_\_\_\_\_

