

CREEPY CRITTERS



Questions to Think About

If someone from China sends you a letter, how does the postal system know where you are? How are supermarkets organized? If you go to a new supermarket, how would you know where to find a specific brand of cheese?

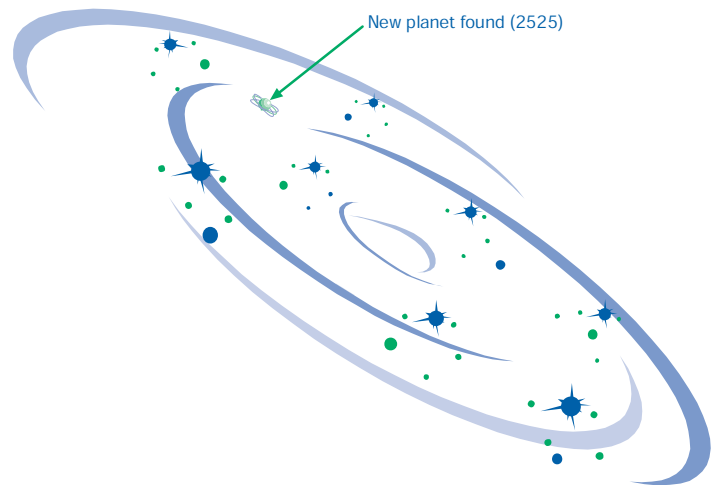
Imagine that in the year 2525, a solar system in a new galaxy is discovered. Many similarities between our solar system and this new one are found, including a planet that resembles Earth. A space probe lands on this planet and sends a variety of different living organisms back to Earth through a molecular transport beam. The macroscopic and microscopic structures of each creature are described. The scientists studying these organisms realize they need to develop a classification scheme to help them compare the life forms to organisms on Earth. Your role is to study the illustrations of the creatures and develop a possible classification scheme based on the information provided for each organism. You must be able to justify and defend the method that you use.

Safety Notes

- Exercise care when using scissors. Point them away from the body when cutting.
- Do not point scissors at other individuals.

What to Do

1. Study the Organism Cards carefully. Note feature similarities and differences of the creatures. Construct a table to help organize your observations. Columns to describe things like hair, antennae, and necks will be helpful.
2. Study the cards again and place them in groups based on the similarities and differences observed. Once the group is satisfied with the results, construct another table listing the characteristics common to each group.
3. Get a set of Newly Discovered Organism Cards from your facilitator. Select one of these organisms and suppose that it was just discovered. Where does it fit in your system of organization? Will you have to create a new group or can you find another way to fit it into an existing group?
4. Present your classification scheme to the large group. Make sure you can justify your methods. How does your classification scheme compare to those created by other groups?



What Did You Find Out By Doing the Activity?

Before doing "Creepy Critters," did you know:

- that not all animals have the same characteristics?
- what the standard classification scheme for organisms is?
- how animals are separated into different groups?
- if how an animal looks has an effect on how it is classified?
- why scientists classify organisms?
- that the basic food groups are another form of classification?

From this activity, did you discover:

- how organisms are classified?
- what factors are most important in classification?
- what benefits come from classifying organisms?
- the major factor that differentiates one species from another?
- how you would further classify yourself as an individual, and what traits would be important in that classification?
- where you would begin if you had to classify an unknown plant?

