

Y6 Classification Keys

KS2 Y6 Science · Follows the national curriculum

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

1. Worked example

Make a key to separate a robin, a trout, a fox and a frog.

Step 1 · Find a question that splits the group

Does it have feathers? Yes: robin

Step 2 · Split what's left (trout, fox, frog)

Does it have fur? Yes: fox

Step 3 · Split the last two (trout, frog)

Does it have fins? Yes: trout. No: frog

Answer: Three yes/no questions identify four animals.

Check: You always need one fewer question than the number of living things.

2. Now try one with the steps

Turn that branching key into a numbered key.

Step 1 · 1. Has feathers

Step 2 · 2. Has fur

Step 3 · 3. Has fins

Answer:

3. Practice

Have a go at each one. There is space underneath to work it out.

1. What is a classification key used for?

2. How many possible answers should each key question have?

3. How many questions do you need in a key for 5 living things?

4. How many questions do you need in a key for 8 living things?

5. Why is 'Is it scary?' a bad key question?

6. Write a good key question to split a bee from a spider.

7. Using the minibeast key: an animal has legs and more than 8 of them. What is it?

8. Using the minibeast key: an animal has no legs and no shell. What is it?

9. What is the difference between a branching key and a numbered key?

10. Write a key question to split a penguin from a seal.

11. Why is 'Is it bigger than a 1p coin?' better than 'Is it small?'

12. Rewrite 'What colour are its wings?' yes/no question.

13. Why should the first question in a key split the group roughly in half?

14. How could you check that your key works?

4. Before you hand it in

Using opinion words like pretty, scary, nice or big.

Ask about observable features, or use a measurement.

Questions with more than two answers, like 'What colour is it?'

Rewrite as 'Is it mainly red?'

Starting halfway down the key.

Always start at question 1 and follow one branch at a time.

Thinking there's only one correct key.

A key is correct if every living thing ends up with its own name.