How do living things find food?

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Food energy

What is a living thing? Plants are living things. Animals are living things. People are living things. Living things grow and change. To stay alive, living things need air, water, and food. Food gives living things the energy they need. Living things need energy to move and grow. They cannot do anything without energy.

We could not stay alive for very long without food. We need different kinds of food.

Energy comes from the sun. Plants catch the sun’s energy and use it to make food. They make food from sunlight, air, and water. Making food using sunlight is called photosynthesis.

The roots of plants take in water from the soil. The leaves of plants take in air and sunlight. Food is made in the leaves of plants.
Plant eaters

The energy of sunlight is stored in plants. When animals or people eat plants, they get the energy of the sun, too. The sun's energy is passed along to the plant eaters. Animals that eat mainly plants are called herbivores.

Different herbivores eat different parts of plants. Some eat grasses and leaves. Some eat fruit, nuts, seeds, flowers, and even wood. Some drink nectar. Nectar is a sweet liquid found in flowers.

This groundhog has found some spring flowers to eat.

Squirrels like nuts, seeds, and fruit.

This bee is drinking nectar from a flower.
Looking for food

Many herbivores are *grazers*. Grazers eat grass and other plants that grow close to the ground. Horses are grazers. They have special stomachs that can break down the grasses they eat. Some herbivores are *browsers*. Browsers eat the leaves of bushes and trees.

*This pony is a grazer. It has the right kind of teeth and stomach for eating grasses.*

There are grasses in oceans, too. Manatees are big ocean grazers. Their mouths are like vacuum cleaners. They can quickly "clean" an area of sea grasses.

*Giraffes are browsers with long necks. They can reach the leaves of tall trees.*

*Butterflies drink flower nectar. A butterfly has a proboscis that can reach inside flowers to suck up the nectar. The proboscis is like a straw.*

*Many herbivores, such as these lemurs, like to eat fruit.*

*Caterpillars eat a lot of leaves before they become butterflies!***
Carnivores eat meat

Animals that eat other animals are called carnivores. “Carnivore” means “meat eater.” Most carnivores are predators. Predators hunt the animals they eat. The animals that predators hunt are called prey.

Cats, such as lions, tigers, and leopards, are big carnivores. They have sharp teeth called canines for grabbing their prey. The ridges on the roof of a cat’s mouth help hold its prey.

Wolves are predators that hunt in groups called packs. This wolf pack has hunted a deer.

This leopard is dragging its prey up into a tree so other carnivores will not steal it.
Air, land, and water

Predators hunt in the air, on land, and in water. Some birds use their beaks for catching prey. Other birds have sharp talons, or claws, for grabbing their prey.

This hawk has grabbed a fish out of water with its talons.

Many fish are carnivores. This great white shark is hunting a seal in water. It has sharp teeth for catching fish, seals, dolphins, and other ocean animals.

This heron has found a rat to eat. It holds the rat in its long beak.

Alligators catch fish in water. On land, they can hunt animals as big as deer. They can run fast.

Some snakes use venom, or poison, to stop their prey from moving.
Insect eaters

Some carnivores look for insects to eat. Insects are small animals with six legs. Birds, frogs, fish, and many other animals eat insects. Animals that eat mainly insects are called **insectivores**. Some plants, such as sundews, also eat insects!

![Sundew plant with an insect trapped](image)

This sundew plant has trapped an insect with its sticky leaves.

![Jumping spider](image)

Spiders eat flies, moths, and other insects. This jumping spider has jumped on a fly to eat.

![Anteater](image)

Anteaters use their sharp claws to dig up ant nests. They eat other insects, too. Their long, sticky tongues grab the insects.

![Mantis](image)

(right) Praying mantises pretend to be leaves, branches, and flowers so their prey will not see them. What does this mantis look like?
What are omnivores?

Omnivores are animals that eat both plants and other animals. Their bodies can live on one or both kinds of foods. Skunks, raccoons, chipmunks, foxes, and many bears are omnivores.

Most birds are omnivores. This blue jay eats nuts, seeds, and other plant foods, but it also eats insects and worms.

Chipmunks eat any food they find. They stuff their cheeks with food.

Black bears eat mainly plants, but they also eat insects, fish, and even animals as big as deer or moose. This baby bear may find nuts or insects to eat in this tree.

Skunks eat plants, but they also eat insects, frogs, birds, and eggs. They love grubs!

Opossums eat any foods they find—even garbage.

Foxes are carnivores that will eat plants if they cannot find animals to hunt.
Food chains

Energy comes from the sun and is used by plants to make food. The sun’s energy is passed along in **food chains**.

The food chain on the next page is made up of a sunflower, a squirrel, and a fox. They all have the sun’s energy inside them.
Nature’s cleaners

When living things die, they still have energy and nutrients in their bodies. Nutrients are the parts of food that keep our bodies healthy. Predators hunt animals, eat some of the meat, and then leave the rest behind. Other animals get the nutrients from the leftovers. Animals that eat the leftovers of dead animals are called scavengers.

Eagles are both predators and scavengers. This eagle has found a dead fox to eat. It is a scavenger when it eats an animal it did not hunt. Scavengers help clean Earth.

Earthworms eat dead plants and also dig tunnels. Air comes into the soil through the tunnels. Air makes the soil better.

This ant has found a dead fly to eat. It is cleaning the forest when it eats dead animals.

Mushrooms are not plants. They are living things called fungi. Fungi are the only cleaners that can break down dead trees. Mushrooms also clean the soil.
Food for people

How do people find food? Most people buy food in supermarkets. Farmers grow vegetables and fruits and raise animals, such as chickens. The foods are then taken to supermarkets in trucks.

The boy below is going to eat a pizza. Pizza is made with flour and tomatoes, which come from plants. It also has cheese and meat, which come from animals.

Some people do not eat meat, but most people eat every kind of food. They eat fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat, cheese, fish, and mushrooms. Name ten kinds of foods in the picture below that you eat.
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