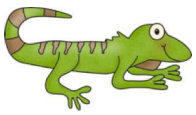
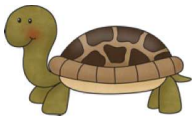
How to Use a Dichotomous Key

1 

2 

3 

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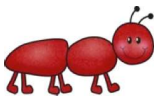
5 

6 

1 a. Backbone . . . . . go to 2
b. No backbone . . . . . go to 5

2 a. Wings . . . . . bat
b. No wings . . . . . go to 3

3 a. Legs . . . . . go to 4
b. No legs . . . . . snake

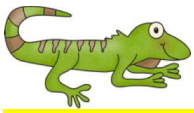
4 a. Shell . . . . . tortoise
b. No shell . . . . . lizard

5 a. Antenna . . . . . ant
b. No antenna . . . . . spider

DIRECTIONS

- Choose one creature to start.
- Read steps 1a and 1b.
- Decide which statement is true and follow the directions.
- The directions will lead you to a new pair of choices.
- Keep doing this until you come to a step that gives you the creature's name.
- Choose a new creature and repeat these steps.
- Do this until you identify every creature.

EXAMPLE



1 a. Backbone . . . . . go to 2
b. No backbone . . . . . go to 5

2 a. Wings . . . . . bat
b. No wings . . . . . go to 3

3 a. Legs . . . . . go to 4
b. No legs . . . . . snake

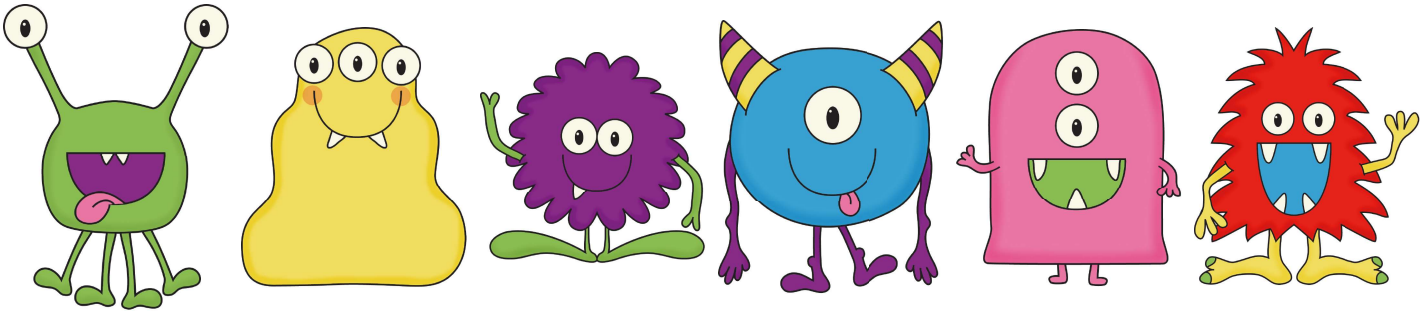
4 a. Shell . . . . . tortoise
b. No shell . . . . . lizard

Graphics by Scrappin Doodles
http://www.scrappindoodles.com/

File by Tricia Stohr-Hunt
http://bookishways.blogspot.com/

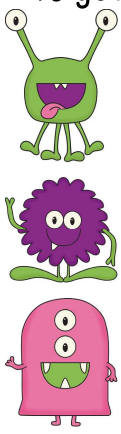
Identifying Aliens with a Dichotomous Key

Look carefully at the aliens pictured below. Use the dichotomous key to find the scientific name for each one.



1	a. Mouth open	go to 2
	b. Mouth not open	go to 4
2	a. Arms	go to 3
	b. No Arms	*Alienus quadlegicus*
3	a. Hairy	*Alienus hairicus*
	b. Not hairy	*Alienus tritoothicus*
4	a. No horns	go to 5
	b. Horns	*Alienus stripicus*
5	a. No legs	*Alienus blobicus*
	b. Legs	*Alienus fuzzicus*

Write your answers below.



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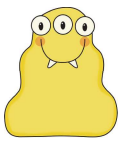

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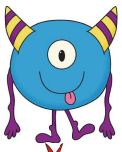


_____

_____

_____

Each of these aliens belongs to the same genus. What is their genus? _____

Look at the species name for each alien. How do you think these names were chosen?

_____

_____

Graphics by Scrappin Doodles
http://www.scrappindoodles.com/

File by Tricia Stohr-Hunt
http://bookishways.blogspot.com/

How to Make a Dichotomous Key

1 2 3 4 5 6

DIRECTIONS

- Carefully observe the traits of each animal.
- Make a list of the traits you can use to sort the animals into groups.
- For the animals above your list might look like this.

Number of legs	Shell
Body covering (scales or hair)	Tail
Exoskeleton	Antenna
Backbone	Wings
Classification (reptile, mammal, etc.)	

- Pick one of the traits from the list to divide the animals into two groups.
- For example, you could start with body covering.

Step 1 a. Scales . . . . . go to 2
B. No scales

- Now look at all the animals with scales and choose another trait from the list to further separate them. Your next choice might be legs. In this step the first animal is named.

Step 2 a. Legs . . . . . go to 3
b. No legs . . . . . snake

- Continue these steps until all animals from the first group (scales) have been named.
- Repeat these steps with the second group of animals until each animal is identified.
- Here's what a completed key might look like.

Step 1 a. Scales . . . . . go to 2
B. No scales . . . . . go to 4

Step 2 a. Legs . . . . . go to 3
b. No legs . . . . . snake

Step 3 a. Shell . . . . . tortoise
b. No shell . . . . . lizard

Step 4 a. Backbone . . . . . bat
b. No backbone . . . . . go to 5

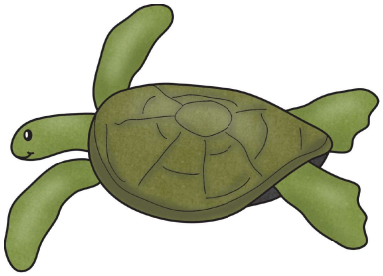
Step 5 a. 8 legs . . . . . spider
b. 6 legs. . . . . ant

- Since there are many traits to use to group these animals, there is more than one way to make a key. This means that there is more than one correct answer!

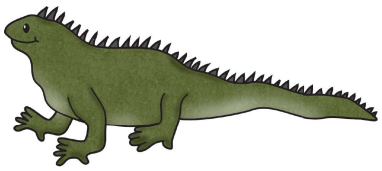
Make Your Own Dichotomous Key

Create a dichotomous key for the animals pictured below.

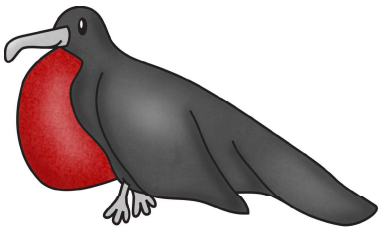
1
Sea Turtle



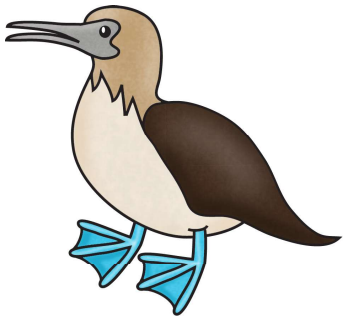
2
Iguana



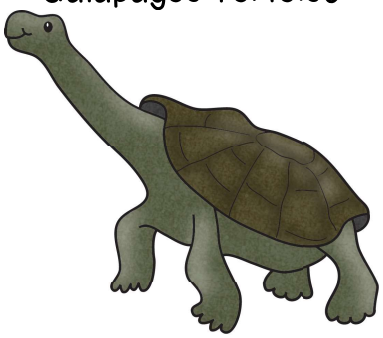
3
Frigatebird



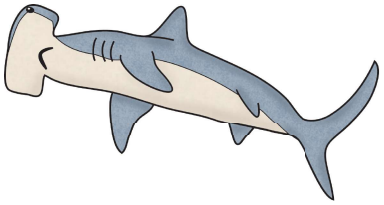
4
Blue-footed Booby



5
Galapagos Tortoise



6
Hammerhead Shark



Step 1 a. _____

b. _____

Step 2 a. _____

b. _____

Step 3 a. _____

b. _____

Step 4 a. _____

b. _____

Step 5 a. _____

b. _____

Step 6 a. _____

b. _____