

Small Organisms

Supplies needed for this activity:

- This is an organism of the day activity and depends on what's available for students to examine.
- 1 hand lens per 2 students
- 1 compound microscope per 2 students. Compound microscopes are not recommended for students younger than 4th or 5th grade
- 1 plastic well slide per 2 students
- Copies of "What to Do" glued to file folder for display if this is for an event
- A copy of the Small Organisms student worksheet for each student.
- Examples of organisms available are: animals such as vinegar eels, snail eggs, brine shrimp or daphnia; protists such as a variety of alga; plants including whole plants and pollen; pond samples of mixtures of organisms.
- The idea is to get students thinking about what they are seeing, develop critical thinking skills and observational skills, and encourage them to characterize an organism and offer evidence for why they have chosen that category.

Directions:

Introduce students to microscopes. Tell them that each group will be given a small organism that is hard to see with just the eye. Their job is to examine the organism with the hand lens and the compound microscope, draw and label what they can, and collect evidence to decide if the organism is a plant, an animal, or something else. For more advanced students, fill in what the something else could be (protist, fungus, bacteria).

Show students how to use the hand lens and the compound microscope to view their organisms. Depending on how much time you have, give them time to make their observations and leave at least 15 minutes at the end of the period for a wrap up activity.

To wrap up: Gather students back together and have each group bring up their organisms. If available, project each type of organism on a screen and ask the students what type of organism they think it is and why. Give them a chance to explore, ask guiding questions, and guide them to what type of organism it is and why.