

Unit 1 Handout _____

Using Physical Characteristics to Classify

Question How do scientists classify organisms?

Objectives Use physical characteristics of organisms to place them in the correct taxon (group)

Background. Early taxonomists classified organisms by their physical characteristics. They would examine an organism's physical features: skin, appendages, teeth, etc. If two organisms looked the same they were probably related. Today we know that isn't always true. Yet, we can still determine some organisms' taxons just by looking at them.

In this activity you will visit an online web site and determine the correct taxon classification of three organisms.

Procedure

1. Visit <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/nature/classifying-life.html>
2. Click on the blue box called "Launch Interactive"
3. Read the instructions and then click on an organism.
4. Record your **CORRECT** answers in the table provided below

	Bear	Orchid	Sea Cucumber
Domain	Eukarya	Eukarya	Eukarya
Kingdom			
Phylum			
Class			
Order			
Family			
Genus			
Species			

Reflect. In the background paragraph I mentioned that we can't always use physical characteristics to classify organism. For example, if we did we would classify snakes and worms together. Why are those two organisms separate from each other? Can you think of any other two organisms that look similar but are very different from each other?