

Food Chains

What do living things all have in common?

There are two things that all these living things have in common:

- 1) We all need food for energy and to grow.
- 2) We are all hungry!

Food Chains

All living things use food as a source of energy. Every living thing needs energy in order to survive and grow into strong adults. A food chain is used to show how energy is passed from one living thing to another, showing how plants, animals and humans rely on each other for food.

Animals get energy and nutrients by eating other animals or plants.

For example

- Caterpillars eat leaves
- Mice eat caterpillars
- Owls eat mice



These links between animals and plants are called **food chains**. The arrow means 'is eaten by'. Nearly all food chains start with a green plant. Most animals and plants are part of more than one food chain.

Producers and consumers

A food chain is split into two main categories. The producer and the consumer.

Producers

Plants use the sun's energy to produce their own food. In Food Chains, we call plants the producers because they produce their own food to get the energy they need to grow and survive directly from the sun's rays, this process is called photosynthesis. They are at the start of a food chain.

Consumers (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary)

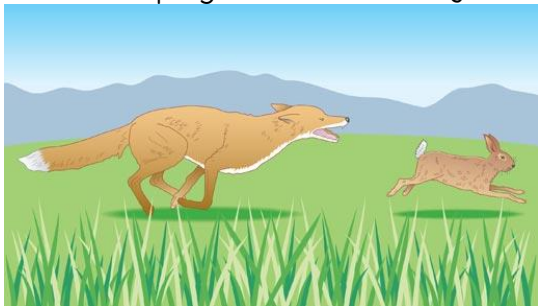
Animals are called consumers because they eat other plants and animals. Some animals only eat plants - called herbivores. In Food Chains, we call herbivores primary consumers because they are the first animal to consume (eat) the plants. The next group, called Secondary consumers, can eat plants or animals. These animals are called Secondary consumers as they eat the Primary Consumers. Animals that eat only meat are called carnivores and animals that eat both plants and meat are called omnivores. The final group of consumers are called tertiary consumers, they eat the secondary consumer and sit at the top of the food chain so are therefore not eaten

Changes to food chains

If one part of a food chain alters, the whole food chain is affected. For example, if a disease suddenly wiped out caterpillars, it would affect mice, owls and many other animals.

Prey and predators

A predator is an animal that eats other animals. The animals that predators eat are called prey. Predators are found at the end of a food chain.



The fox will eat the rabbit. The fox is the predator and the rabbit is the prey.