DIFFERENT WAYS OF CLASSIFYING

When you classify things, such as books or games, you put the things that have similar characteristics together. These characteristics could be topic, author, or size. Sorting things into groups makes it easier to keep track of them.

Organizing things according to their similarities and differences is called classification. **Classification systems** are often used to sort living and non-living things into separate categories. Living things share the same characteristics and needs.

But how can you further classify all the thousands of living things around you? People use different systems, depending on what they want to know and what is important to them. For example, if grocery stores were to close the first thing you would probably want to know is which plants you could eat and which plants you couldn't. Eventually, you would need and want to know much more. Grouping living things according to your observations helps you keep track of your knowledge.

Indigenous Ways of Classifying

Living Things

All people use classification systems to organize their knowledge of the living things around them. Indigenous people rely on their detailed knowledge of living things to help them survive on the plants and animals that are available to them.

Indigenous peoples, for example, use classification systems that are based on careful observation of the living world. Indigenous peoples have classified hundreds of different plants according to their uses, such as food and medicine. This information has been passed from generation to generation.

Indigenous peoples also classify animals according to important characteristics. For example, they classify animals according to which animals are useful and which are dangerous, or where the animals are found. They also classify animals on the basis of helpful information, such as the season in which the animals can be hunted or the animals' use as a source of clothing or food.

Scientific Ways of Classifying

Living Things

Scientists use classification systems to help understand the diversity of life on Earth. They examine the internal structures (cells and organs) and external structures (what the organism looks like) of living things to discover how organisms are similar and how they are different. They use microscopes and other forms of technology to compare organisms in a very detailed way. For example, they can compare the cell structure of different organisms. They can also compare organisms from around the world to discover how different organisms may be related.

