

WEB OF LIFE



The natural world is rich and complex. Plants and animals connect with one another in many different ways. Here are some ideas to help us understand those connections better.

One is a **habitat**, an area where a plant, animal, or other organism lives. The habitat has everything the plant, animal, or organism needs — the right kind of food, the right amount of water and sunlight, the right temperature, to name a few. What is your habitat? What do you need to be healthy?



Another is an ecosystem. Ecosystems and habitats are related but not the same thing. **An ecosystem is a space with many different things impacting others**, such as different plants, animals, or organisms, and the habitats in which they live. What are some different plants and animals in your local ecosystem?



There are many ways that all parts of an ecosystem interact. One way is that animals eat plants (leaves, grass, seeds, etc.) or other animals. **Symbiosis is when different plants or animals live together in a way that helps each organism.** A species of plant or animal that's new to the ecosystem might make it harder for an older species to survive; we call this competition.



All these different interactions create a web of connection. Fill in the web on the next page to map out your own neighborhood ecosystem!

Fill in the circles with organisms in your neighborhood ecosystem. Then, draw lines from circle to circle when you think of ways they impact each other, starting from the sun, since it's the source of all energy. Plants make it possible for animals (including humans!) to absorb energy from the sun.

Once you've created this web, trace a path through it to see how everything is interconnected. Talk with your adult about what happens when one piece of it disappears. How does it affect the rest of the web?

