

Name: _____

What is a Food Chain? KEY

Every living thing needs energy and nutrients (food) but different organisms get these from different places. A **food chain** shows where different organisms get the food they need to survive in an **ecosystem**.

Plants and algae (plant-like organisms that live in water) are able to make their own food using energy from the sun. These organisms are called **producers** because they produce their own food.

Some animals eat these producers. These animals are called **consumers** because they consume something else to get their food. There are different types of consumers. An animal that eats producers, like plants or algae, is called an **herbivore**. **Carnivores** eat other consumers. This means they eat other animals. Animals that eat both producers and consumers are called **omnivores**. When animals die, **decomposers** can break them down so that plants can use the nutrients again and the cycle can start over.

Sometimes, there are different animals that eat the same thing. In one habitat, there can be several different food chains. When these food chains connect, they make a **food web**.

Words to Know

- **food chain:** a group of organisms linked in the order of what they eat
- **ecosystem:** living and non-living things that interact with each other in an area
- **producer:** something that makes its own energy
- **consumer:** something that eats producers or other animals
- **decomposer:** something that breaks down dead material
- **food web:** food chains in an ecosystem that are connected

1. How do animals depend on each other for survival?

Some animals need to eat other animals to survive. They are able to get the energy they need from the other animal.

2. In the ocean, *phytoplankton* are eaten by a small shrimp called a krill. Blue whales then eat the krill. Using the “**Words to Know**” list above, write what type of organism you think phytoplankton is. How does it get its energy? Why do you think that?

Phytoplankton are producers. They make their own food using sunlight. Students should indicate the phytoplankton do not need to eat something in order to survive.

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