



Plants and Animals! Prep Science at Home

You can help! Your child is noticing plants and animals every day. You can help them look more closely and describe what they see — every walk outside is a science lesson!

Why are we learning this? Country is full of living things

Up here in the north, we are surrounded by some of the most amazing plants and animals in the world. First Nations families have always had deep knowledge of the living things on Country — which plants are food, which animals come in the wet season, and how to tell them apart by looking closely at their features. Learning to observe, describe and sort living things is a skill your child will use every day, and it connects their classroom science to the Country they already know and love.

My child will learn to:

✓ Spot external features

See and name the parts on the outside of a plant or animal — like leaves, fur, fins or feathers.

✓ Describe what they see

Use words to tell you about what a plant or animal looks like on the outside.

✓ Sort into groups

Put plants or animals into groups that have something in common — like all the ones with fur together.

✓ Explain their grouping

Tell you WHY they put things in a group — "These all have feathers" or "These all have green leaves".

Big ideas to know:

External features

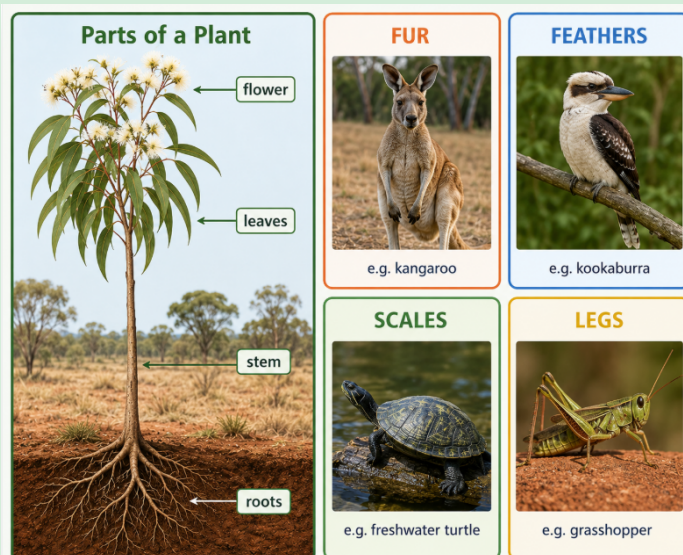
These are the parts of a living thing you can SEE on the outside. A plant's leaves, stem and roots are its features. An animal's fur, fins or feathers are its features. Scientists use these features to identify and sort living things into groups.

Plants

Plants are living things that grow in one place. They have roots (underground — absorb water), a stem (holds the plant up), leaves (make food from sunlight) and sometimes flowers or fruit. Plants cannot move around — they stay where they are planted.

Animals

Animals are living things that can move around to find food and shelter. They can be covered in fur (kangaroo), feathers (bird), scales (barramundi or lizard) or smooth skin (frog). The body covering tells you a lot about where an animal lives!





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Ways to sort living things

Sort by	What to look for	Examples from up here
Body covering	What is the animal's outside made of? Fur, feathers, scales or smooth skin?	Dog → fur. Magpie → feathers. Barramundi → scales. Frog → smooth skin.
Number of legs	How many legs does it have? Count carefully!	Cat → 4 legs. Ant → 6 legs. Spider → 8 legs. Snake → no legs. Bird → 2 legs.
Plant features	Does it have flowers? What colour? Big or small leaves? Smooth or rough edges?	Sort leaves by size or shape. Group flowers by colour.
Where it lives	Does it live in water, on land, or in a tree?	Fish → water. Kangaroo → land. Possum → trees. Crocodile → both!

Think Like a Scientist — Nature Sort

Go outside together and find or draw 5 living things — plants or animals. Sort them into groups. There is no wrong answer — whatever makes sense to your child!

Ask: "Why did you put those ones together?" The explaining is the science — your child is practising the same skill that real scientists use to classify living things!

You will need: (Materials)

- Collection bag or basket
- Paper and pencil or crayons
- Outdoor space (yard, garden or nearby bush)
- Magnifying glass (optional)

Things to look for outside:

1. A leaf — what shape is it? Smooth or rough edges?
2. An ant or insect — how many legs? Does it have wings?
3. A lizard or bird — what covers its body? Count its legs!
4. A flower — what colour? How many petals can you count?
5. A tree — can you see the trunk, leaves and roots?

Questions to ask your child

1. Is that a plant or an animal? How do you know?
2. What can you see on the outside of that animal — fur, feathers, scales or skin?
3. How many legs does it have? Can you count them?
4. Can you find two animals that are the same in some way?

5. What parts can you see on that plant — roots, stem, leaves, flowers?
6. Can you sort these into two groups? How did you sort them?
7. What is different about a bird and a fish?

There are no wrong answers in this activity — your child is learning to look closely and use words to describe what they see. Naming the parts ("that's a fin", "those are feathers") is the most important skill at this stage!

Key words to know:

External features	The parts of a living thing you can see on the outside — like leaves, fur, fins or feathers
Plant	A living thing that grows in one place and makes its own food using sunlight — has roots, stem and leaves
Animal	A living thing that can move around to find food and shelter
Body covering	What covers the outside of an animal — fur, feathers, scales or smooth skin
Roots	The underground part of a plant — absorbs water and nutrients from the soil
Sort	To put things into groups based on something they have in common
Observe	To look very carefully at something and notice details — the most important science skill!

Key words to look up

External features · Plant · Animal · Body covering · Roots · Sort · Observe

What school will check

By the end of Prep, your child needs to identify and describe the external features of living things, sort plants and animals by observable features, and explain their sorting.

Try it at home!

Walk around your yard or nearby bush and spot 3 different animals together. Describe each one using its body covering, number of legs and where it lives. You are doing real biology!