***Food Chains and Webs --- "What's for dinner?"***

 Every organism needs to **obtain energy** in order to live. For example, **plants get energy from the sun**, some animals eat plants, and some animals eat other animals.

 A **food chain** is the sequence of **who eats whom** in a biological community (an ecosystem) to obtain nutrition. A food chain starts with the **primary energy source**, usually the **sun** or boiling-hot deep sea vents. The next link in the chain is an **organism that makes its own food** from the primary energy source -- an example is **photosynthetic plants** that make their own food from sunlight (using a process called **photosynthesis**) and **chemosynthetic bacteria** that make their food energy from chemicals in hydrothermal vents. These are called **autotrophs** or **primary producers**.



 Next come organisms that eat the autotrophs; these organisms are called **herbivores** or **primary consumers** -- an example is a rabbit that eats grass. The next link in the chain is animals that eat herbivore - these are called **secondary consumers** -- an example is a snake that eats rabbits. In turn, these animals are eaten by larger **predators** -- an example is an owl that eats snakes. The **tertiary consumers** are eaten by **quaternary consumers** -- an example is a hawk that eats owls. Each food chain ends with a **top predator** and animal with **no natural enemies** (like an alligator, hawk, or polar bear).

**Food Chain Questions**

1. **What travels through a food chain or web?**
2. **What is the ultimate energy for all life on Earth?**
3. **Food chains start with what?**
4. **The 1st organism in a food chain must always be what type of organism?**
5. **Name 2 food making processes.**
6. **Where do chemosynthetic bacteria get their energy?**
7. **Define herbivore.**
8. **Herbivores are also called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**
9. **What are animals called that feed on herbivores?**
10. **Secondary consumers are eaten by larger \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**
11. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ consumers eat secondary consumers.**
12. **Make a food chain with a producer and 3 consumers.**



The arrows in a food chain show the flow of **energy**, from the sun or hydrothermal vent to a top predator. As the energy flows from organism to organism, energy is lost at each step. A network of many **food chains** is called a **food web**.

**Trophic Levels:**
The trophic level of an organism is the position it holds in a food chain.

1. **Primary producers** (organisms that make their own food from sunlight and/or chemical energy from deep sea vents) are the base of every food chain - these organisms are called **autotrophs**.
2. **Primary consumers** are animals that eat primary producers; they are also called **herbivores** (plant-eaters).
3. **Secondary consumers** eat primary consumers. They are **carnivores** (meat-eaters) and **omnivores** (animals that eat both animals and plants).
4. **Tertiary consumers** eat secondary consumers.
5. **Quaternary consumers** eat tertiary consumers.
6. Food chains "end" with top predators, animals that have little or no natural enemies.

 When any organism dies, it is eventually eaten by **detrivores** (like vultures, worms and crabs) and broken down by **decomposers** (mostly bacteria and fungi), and the exchange of energy continues.

 Some organisms' position in the food chain **can vary as their diet differs.** For example, when a bear eats berries, the bear is functioning as a **primary consumer**. When a bear eats a plant-eating rodent, the bear is functioning as a **secondary consumer**. When the bear eats salmon, the bear is functioning as a **tertiary consumer** (this is because salmon is a secondary consumer, since salmon eat herring that eat zooplankton that eat phytoplankton, that make their own energy from sunlight). Think about how **people's place in the food chain varies - often within a single meal!**

**Food Web Questions**

1. **What is used to indicate the flow of energy in a food chain or web?**
2. **What happens to energy as we move from step to step in a chain or web?**
3. **Define food web.**
4. **What is meant by trophic levels?**
5. **Define autotroph.**
6. **The 1st trophic level consists of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ producers called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**
7. **Name the 2nd trophic level (both names).**
8. **Secondary consumers may be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ eating meat or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that eat both plants and animals.**
9. **What is the 3rd trophic level called?**
10. **What is the 4th trophic level called?**
11. **At the 5th trophic level would be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ consumers that eat \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ consumers.**
12. **Give an example of 3 detrivores. On what do they feed?**
13. **What organism feeds on dead plants and animals and helps recycle them?**
14. **Both \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_act as decomposers**
15. **Can an organism fill more than one trophic level --- yes or no? Give an example.**

**Numbers of Organisms:**
 In any **food web**, **energy is lost each time one organism eats another**. Because of this, there have to be many **more plants than there are plant-eaters**. There are **more autotrophs than heterotrophs**, and more plant-eaters than meat-eaters. Each level has about **10% less energy** available to it because **some of the energy is lost as heat** at each level. Although there is **intense competition** between animals, there is also **interdependence**. When one **species goes extinct**, it can affect an entire chain of other species and have unpredictable consequences.

1. **In food chains and webs, what trophic level must you have more of than others?**
2. **Each trophic level has how much LESS energy?**
3. **What may happen if a species goes extinct?**

**Equilibrium**
 As the number of **carnivores in a community increases**, they eat more and more of the herbivores, decreasing the herbivore population. It then becomes harder and harder for the carnivores to find herbivores to eat, and the population of carnivores decreases. In this way, the carnivores and herbivores stay in a **relatively stable equilibrium**, each limiting the other's population. A similar equilibrium exists between plants and plant-eaters.

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| **Complete the Food Chains Worksheet** Circle the organisms that complete the food chains below. |  |



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| **Food Chain Worksheet**Read the passage then answer the questions below. |  |



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| **Food Web Worksheet**Read the passage then answer the questions below. |  |

