

Year 5

Life cycles: activity ideas

1 Create a display to illustrate food chains. Stretch thread across the classroom and hang on it large pictures of creatures that the children have drawn. Arrows should also be attached to show the direction of the food chain. These can be affixed with paperclips, so they can be easily moved or replaced. What are the shortest and the longest food chains the children can find?

2 Working in pairs or small groups, provide the children with two envelopes. One should contain pictures of a range of mature plants; the other, pictures of seeds from those plants. Ask the children to match the seeds to the correct plant. This could be done in larger groups with real plants and seeds. However, the obvious advantage of pictures is that you can include large plants, such as trees, or unfamiliar plants, which may prompt further discussion.

3 Create a collection of fruits with seeds. Cut them up and remove the seeds.

Safety note: ensure that any cutting is done under close adult supervision. Also, look at seeds such as dandelion, sycamore and maize, which are not from fleshy fruits. Ask the children to examine the seeds, compare them, and discuss the different ways in which they may be dispersed.

4 After ensuring that the children have had sufficient opportunities to learn about the life cycle of plants, ask them to explain the process in a 'Gardeners' Question Time' format. This could be done as a drama activity, with a question from an audience member being read out, and 'the experts' on the panel providing the answers. The whole thing could be taped.

5 Ask the children to identify aspects that have changed in their own lives since birth. What care do new-born babies require from their parents? What are they able to do independently as they grow?

6 Take photographs of plants and animals in the local environment. Provide the children with the photographs and ask them to identify the plants or animals using a classification key. This activity could be used to develop ICT skills.

7 Produce a slide show to illustrate the effect of light on the growth of a plant. Using a digital camera, take a photograph of a healthy green plant. Place the plant in an area where it receives no light, and take photographs of it regularly. Over the course of a few days or weeks, what do the children observe happening to the plant? Place the plant back in an area of plentiful light, and photograph it again at regular intervals. What changes do the children notice? Use an interactive whiteboard to display the photographs in sequence as a slide show.

8 Ask the children to explain where plants get their food from. How do people try to help plants to grow? Show some examples of fertilisers and plant food labels.

Safety note: children should not handle fertiliser. Explain that plants take in water and nutrients through their roots, and that it is chemicals in the fertiliser that are providing the extra nutrients. Make sure that the children understand that fertilisers are not food. Plants do not take in food through the roots, but produce their own food by the process of photosynthesis.

